

“Mountain Woman Voodoo”: Resistance and Resilience in Appalachian Foodways

by Emeran Irby

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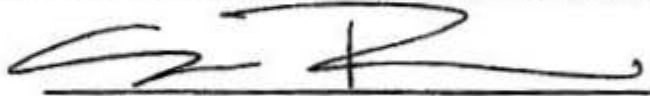
Master of Arts in Food Studies

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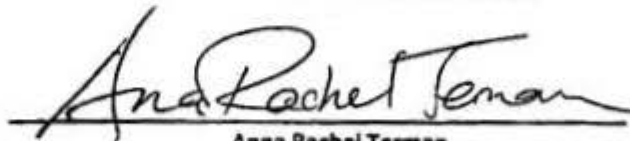
**"Mountain Woman Voodoo": Resistance and Resilience in Appalachian
Foodways**



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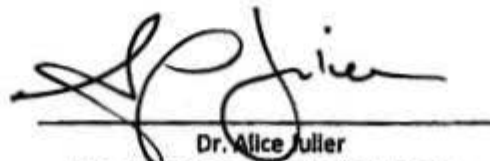


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Introduction

My sunbathed toes push against the cool cement in rhythmic rocking motion. I lean my head back against the top of the rocking chair, eyes closed, face tilted to catch the afternoon light. Moving my head to the left, I open my eyes slightly to see Opal rocking in the chair next to me, hands folding gently on the lap of her light blue jeans. Her eyes are open just enough to watch the flock of kids running back and forth across the field kicking a soccer ball. The summer air brings whiffs of flowering basil, left in the garden to go to seed, and the sounds of Opal's husband Lee pickin' the banjo not too far away. Opal and I rock quietly in sync, listening to the sounds and breathing in the smells of the Kentucky mountain summer.

My family has been buying sauerkraut and apple butter out of the trunk of Opal's car every summer since I was ten years old. I should say, Opal isn't kin to me in terms of blood relation, but she is a part of a community in Hindman, Kentucky that I considered to be my extended family. The city of Hindman is the largest in Knott county, but is only home to roughly 800 people (2010 census report). The main street holds the court house, the Appalachian Artisan center, and several local law offices. But every summer Hindman comes alive with music and dance as folk artists from around the country gather at the Settlement School for a week of workshops. This is where I met Opal.

The jars we bought from her traveled with us the two hundred miles from Knott County back to Louisville and sat in our pantry until mid winter when my mom would spread the apple butter on my morning toast. I never thought this food was special. It was just something Opal made and we bought and that was it. It wasn't until my fifteenth summer rocking next to Opal that I asked her how she made her apple butter. She told me of learning over an open fire with her mother and grandmother. She told me how hard it was just to get one jar filled, how her family would spend days at a time putting up the garden just to have enough food to last them the winter. She cooed the word "honey" at me before every sentence, sheepishly smiling as I pressed her for more details. We rocked in those chairs, the sounds of children's laughter the sharp banjo whistling from the adjacent porch, and Opal told me stories of food in Appalachia. I realized that the apple butter I had thought so little of, something I assumed was not that different from what I could buy at the grocery store, was in fact made up of stories and memories of the mountains that had long gone untold.

Ties to place and food depend upon memory, ritual, and emotion. Those experiences are often seen as the work of women and marginalized people, who are both the

keepers of culture and its unsung heroes. Food is the key repository of memory and functions to keep people tied to a place, even as culture and distance change (Sutton, 2010). Regional foodways are a crucial area in food studies, going back to folklore studies, anthropology and history (Yoder, 1995; Kay and Musselman, 1995; Egerton, 1987). Community boundaries are often defined by the foods grown and eaten therein. For much of human history, food has been a way of labeling a place. This can be seen vividly in how food of the American mountain south is grown, processed, preserved, as both a means of sustenance and differentiation but also of pride and prowess in making due but also appreciating a bountiful landscape. In looking at these diverse meanings, we can piece together an image of the region that has little in common with prevalent stereotypes of the region and its people (Lundy, 2005). Those stereotypes center on simplistic and demeaning depictions of rural life as rife with poverty, indolence, and ignorance (citation). Even when these stories of place are told in order to improve conditions – such as those from the War on Poverty – they create symbolic rather than real portraits of everyday life. Appalachia has been represented in the media, both historically and today, in ways that erase the experience and often obscure the different access that men and women have to self-representation.

Roughly defined as the region beginning in Maryland and ending at the top of Alabama, Appalachia harbors a culture that is vastly different from the rest of America, even from parts of the South that are still considered to be included in its culinary boundaries. According to celebrated regional historian Ronni Lundy, the culture of the Southern mountains is defined by connection (Lundy, 2005), or the importance of community and networks in cultivating resilience. In contrast with the culture of acquisition that we see

in other parts of America, Appalachia has celebrated treasures that are intangible, both out of rural necessity and culturally celebrated rituals. Lundy points to the many ways that Appalachians take care of one another, by sharing stories, songs, and especially food. While mass culture is shaped by exposure to national media, regional identities in America are still largely shaped by shared material culture, such as art, music, and food, and transmitted through cuisine and cooking. Because these practices are often divided along gendered lines, although men contribute to the creation and preservation of culture, women have historically carried most of the burden of knowledge and labor. In the South and in Appalachia especially, the gendering of culinary narratives plays a big part in what gets celebrated and remembered.

The role of place and material resources in creating these ties cannot be overstated. Kentucky author, Ronni Lundy describes it best, saying “My sense is that there are certain characteristics—independence and resourcefulness, earth and sky knowledge, an appreciation of silence, for instance—that are fostered by life in a mountain region” (Hoffman, 2016). Southern Appalachia is the most biodiverse food-shed in North America, a fact that surprises most people who have built up stereotypes of a barren, primitive landscape, littered with coal mines. Media attention on Appalachia is fascinated with the “scrappy, intelligent way of cooking that, out of necessity, embraced preserving, canning, fermenting and using every part of the animal,” techniques that are not at all new to the region (Black, 2016). The problem with these representations is that they reduce the complex truths of Appalachian food; that they are not monolithic, they are fluid and changing even from “holler to holler.” A holler is defined as the hollows between mountains, usually where streams run off the mountains. These have largely become the way

that individuals in Kentucky organize themselves, creating smaller microcosms of communities. Additionally, the culture and communities that have been sustained throughout the isolated mountain South have been largely cultivated by women, who have been the mothers and grandmothers to not only their own families, but to much larger communities, from hollers to cities and even counties. Canning and preserving are often women's work, gendered, but also critical to survival and self-sufficiency in a region that has suffered from economic exploitation. These practices define place and people but are also not as richly represented as they could be.

I was drawn to documenting and describing food preservation practices in Kentucky because both historical and contemporary representations of Appalachia—its people, its cultural Regional cuisines and cultures often get treated as national trends. In the US in the current decade, Appalachian foodways are experiencing a glut of national attention, with chefs and restaurants being celebrated in publications like the New York Times and Eater and cookbooks making best seller lists and winning awards. However, the everyday practices of people are generally not done for tourism and promotion, but for community and continuity.

The focus of this research is on the ways that food practices, specifically canning and preserving, have contributed to the larger narrative of Appalachia. In doing this systematic examination, I do not seek to draw any broad conclusions about the food culture of Appalachia as a whole, but instead look specifically at Knott County and Letcher County in Eastern Kentucky as unique and connected to a larger regional narrative. Using in-depth oral histories with nine residents from both of these counties, I will draw out a number of themes, concepts, and material conditions that shape women's experience of

canning and preserving and demonstrate how such practices operate in a context of both continuity and change.

Throughout this work I explore how food preservation in Appalachia, contributes to questions of regional identity, community, and social capital. Focusing primarily on women, I used oral history as a means of examining how food narratives are shaped by regionality and food labor and vice versa.

In doing this research, three key themes kept emerging from the narratives. The first theme was self-sufficiency, or the desire to have control of defining one's experiences and stories. The second theme centers on the way that gender is constructed and maintained through food and cooking practices. The third theme focuses on the connection to place and the importance of land to individual and community identity. While the voices speak for themselves, I situate the stories in three historical and social trends: (1) how gendered labor practices divide paid and unpaid work and devalue the caring labor of cultural production, (2) the discursive construction of Appalachia as a region and how media and politics have contributed to narrowing definition and (3) how poverty has or has not shaped food practices.

The Process

The practice of oral history has been an integral tool to the field of public history. By examining the relationship between history, memory, and authority, oral histories can present more complicated windows into the past. In the discipline of public history, *A Shared Authority* by Michael Frisch serves as a foundational text. In this text, Frisch takes a critical eye to how oral history functions, determining it does one of two things,

and sometimes both at once. First, he states that oral history “functions as a source of historical information and insights, to be used” (Frisch, 1990, p.9). Frisch is arguing that oral histories can present elements of history that may have otherwise gone undocumented or unvalued, primarily personal experience and memory. He goes on to state that “oral history can (also) be understood as a way of bypassing historical interpretation itself, avoiding all the attendant elitist and contextual dangers” (Frisch, 1990, p.6). Oral histories offer an uninterrupted, direct way of communicating with the past because they describe personal and direct experience. These two functions are important in understanding both the function of oral histories and the reasons I’ve chosen to use them as a method of analysis.

In the simplest terms, oral histories are long form interviews that take place between the researcher and the participant. Normally each interview is recorded as a means of archiving the words of the participant. When conducting oral history interviews, format and the types of questions asked are essential. In *A Shared Authority*, Frisch speaks to the complexity of interviews, suggesting that three questions should be asked when analyzing the transcription, “what sort of person is speaking? What sort of thing is he or she talking about? and what sort of statements about it are being made?” (Frisch, 1990, p.10). Through these questions the researcher will be able to understand the relationship between history and memory. The relationship between history and memory as a means of determining authenticity has been greatly disputed in the field of public history. However, by asking the three questions listed above, Frisch argues that the research will be able to more readily understand “the possible combinations in which people relate and integrate the dimensions of past and present experience” (Frisch, 1990, p.10). Oral histo-

ries are a dialogue between two individuals, in which both sides have equal authority in the process of creating a historical document. In this way, oral histories become documents of the past that can contribute to the larger dialogue of history, but should not be taken as the sole indicator of events of the past.

Memory in the process of oral history is understood as the “process by which the past is received, digested, and actively related to the present, and an opportunity to see how a broader class consciousness is expressed in the ways people communicate that memory or experience in the social context of an interview” (Frisch, 1990, p.61). Although I aimed for longer authentic interactions, one limitation in my research method was that I was unable to expand the timeframe in which the interviews were collected. The relationship and trust built between the interviewer and the interviewee is important when examining the depth of information shared between them. Trust becomes an important foundation to the complexity of oral histories. In my research, I was only able to build trust on a small scale because I collected interviews in very short timeframes. Subsequently, the interviewees likely did not share the depths of information they might have shared with someone with whom they had a more familiar relationship. I recognized the limitations of this in my research and worked to build as much trust as possible between myself and the interviewer in the given timeframe, particularly focusing on my relationship to other people known by the interviewee and by centralizing my, albeit distant, connections to the region through family and history.

The People

The driveway up to the Wilson’s house is nearly a 45-degree angle. I worry for a moment that my tiny car won’t make it up the mountain, pushing my foot down harder on

the gas. They live in Blackey, Kentucky, a small community outside of Whitesburg that is a yet another maze of winding roads and disguised road signs. I'll admit I, once again, got lost. Appalachia is even harder to navigate in the dark.

Malcolm meets me on the porch, his house lit up with warm light against the mountain. "Did you find it alright?" I blush as I admit how I got turned around. He assures me that's normal and we head inside. The walls of the house are lined with art, a museum of Appalachian artists. I stand in awe for a moment before Jennifer embraces me, complimenting my haircut and expressing her excitement that we were able to connect. The house smells of cornbread and bacon grease, comforting to my empty stomach.

We sit down on the couch, nestled between two dogs and a fluffy cat. Before I even have time to thank them for having me over for dinner, they hand me two large bags of presents. "In true Appalachian style, we can't let you leave this house empty handed", Jennifer tells me as I begin to unwrap the gifts. Jars upon jars of homemade hot sauce that Malcolm explains have strong ties to moments and stories in his life, and the richest colored vegetable broth I've ever seen, which Jennifer assures me will make anything taste "just a little bit better." I leave the Wilson's that evening with an arm full of gifts and a soul full of stories.

Jennifer and Malcolm Wilson, Blackey, Kentucky, February, 2017

For this research, I collected interviews from nine individuals in Eastern Kentucky. The sample was made up of eight women and one man. In order to make up the sample I relied heavily on the snowball effect of individuals referring me to others. This process was effective but because I was not physically in those locations for very long, it limited my ability to build trust with the individuals, which undoubtedly influenced the amount of information they felt like they could disclose to me. However, this limitation did not hinder my ability to draw themes and connections from the nine interviews and most people spoke to me with ease and interest in the project.

Each interview was approximately one hour long and took place at the home of the individual or at a neutral meeting place of their choosing. Allowing them to choose the location was done to ensure their comfort and ability to control their own story. I allowed for additional time before and after each interview to spend time and reflect with each individual

The women (and one man) were all from Knott county, Letcher county, or Floyd county. Lori Gearheart is a white woman in her early 40s, originally from Indiana, but moved to Kentucky with her husband and two children to take over a portion of her husband's family land. They are starting a homestead in Hueysville, Kentucky.

Deborah Lynn Ruffett is Lori's cousin. She is a white woman in her late 40s who recently returned to Hueysville after the loss of her grandmother. She is currently living in her grandmother's home, just down the road from Lori, and his hoping to eventually move there full time.

Malcolm and Jennifer Wilson are husband and wife. They are both white and in their early 60s, with children and grandchildren. Malcolm is a photographer most well-known for his project "Humans of Central Appalachia". Jennifer works as the project manager for the Kentucky office for rural health. They both grew up in Harlan county, Kentucky and have recently moved back to Blackey, Kentucky after living in Tennessee.

Debbie Wallen is a white woman in her early 50s who is a stay at home grandmother and caretaker for her ill mother. She lives on a holler in Mousie, Kentucky in a home that has been in her family for generations. She is an avid gardener and has been a part of Grow Appalachia since it began in Knott county. She also loves rabbits and keeps six of them for her grandchildren.

Becky Fugate is the youngest participant that I interviewed. She is white and in her early 30s, with two children. She recently took a position at the Hindman Settlement School as the Farmers Market coordinator. This is a VISTA position that will work to create a more successful market for farmers in Knott county. Becky is very passionate

about local food in Eastern Kentucky and dreams of opening a farm-to-table restaurant on the plot of land she owns with her family.

Nell Fields is resident of Letcher county. She is a white woman in her late 60s who has worked extensively in public health in Eastern Kentucky. Currently she serves as a project coordinator for the Kentucky Mountain Air Project, a study aimed at understanding the many pollutants in Eastern Kentucky in order to better inform residents of ways to avoid them. Nell has lived in Whitesburg for generations and still lives on the holler that she grew up on.

Bev May is a resident of Floyd county. She is a white woman in her late 50s and is partners with Nell on the Kentucky Mountain Air Project. Prior to this project, Bev worked in rural health, running a clinic for individuals without insurance. She also serves on the board of the Floyd county farmers market and is one of the founding members. Bev is an avid gardener and lives on Wilson creek just down the holler from her family home.

Janet Kincer is a resident of Letcher county. She is a white woman in her late 40s and has been working as an educator in Eastern Kentucky for nearly a decade. She currently works as the farmer's market coordinator for the Letcher county farmers market and is a project coordinator for the Appaltree project, an initiative aimed at getting healthy drinking water into schools. She is a member of the Cowan Creek canners and has been canning and preserving with her family for decades.

As indicated through these summaries, all the individuals interviewed for this project were white. This is a limitation to the research and a marker of class within the findings. Appalachia as a whole, once a center for diversity during the height of mining

(Eller, 2008), is now overwhelmingly white. According to the census report, Letcher county and Knott county are 98% white alone, while Floyd county is 97% white alone (Census 2016). The whiteness of these individuals is both a strength and a weakness for them, affording them a level of privilege not given to minorities in the region, while also holding them to a certain level of poverty that is seen throughout Appalachia. Theorizing race in this context is important when understanding how these individuals gain power and privilege within their communities, but is not the central theme of this research.

Ethics in a Landscape Scarred by Stereotypes

When researching Appalachia, it is imperative to consider the history of negative misrepresentation in news and popular culture. Appalachians have long suffered at the hands of journalists and reporters who have largely been “outsiders.” The outsider narrative of Appalachia was, at one point, the predominant source of information about the region. Thanks to the introduction of Appalachian Studies in 1977 (Appalachian Studies Association) and other cultural and sociological perspectives the narrative of Appalachia has become increasingly intersectional and multi-disciplinary; however, the fear of misrepresentation still exists within many mountain residents. I took this tension into account in my study and framed my questions accordingly.

Even though I am from Kentucky, I have not lived in that region and knew I would still be considered an “outsider” by many people. Even taking into consideration that I am a researcher representing a university, I still had to be aware of my position when conducting the interviews. The aims of oral history work is to document the stories of the subjects, and as a researcher it is my responsibility to make the subject feel com-

fortable enough to divulge their story. While I learned a lot, it is important to note that being there for only a few weeks at a time left me, in some ways, as an “outsider.”

Exploitation was a very important consideration within the scope of my research, primarily because one of the largest themes of this work is the accurate representation of the women of Appalachia. I believe strongly that subjects should be able to tell their own story, define their own narrative, and ultimately speak for themselves when it comes to food practices. In order to avoid exploitation, I thought carefully about the questions in my study and was very honest and upfront with those individuals who agreed to work with me (Oakley, 1981). Each participant signed two forms of consent that informed them of their rights to all of the information that I gathered, and the right to stop the interview at any time. I also made each subject aware of my intentions upon completion of this work, how I hoped to contribute to the larger narrative of Appalachian foodways and gender roles in the region, avoiding the extractive nature with which much of the information about Appalachia has been gathered. I believe that this allowed me to create a space that was open to conversation and trust.

Constructing Gender at The Dinner Table: Appalachian Women and Food

I meet Debbie at the kitchen table of her Granny Ruffets house. In between spoonful's of soup beans, she tells me about growing up in Kentucky. Like most young Appalachians, Debbie left the region for college and then stayed in Indiana to raise her children. However, her eyes light up when she speaks of summer spent snapping beans on the front porch with her Granny. The table where we sit, dipping cornbread into the soup, is where Debbie gathered with her family every Sunday as a child. She tells me stories of family dramas, community deaths, or local weddings all of which involved a gathering around this table. The house is small, only four full rooms, but the two bedrooms and living room combined make up the size of the kitchen. The kitchen holds the house together.

We finish our lunch and I ask Debbie if I can come back for a visit tomorrow. She offers me a bed for the night and tells me I am welcome anytime. I am warmed by more than the soupbeans.

Debbie Ruffett-Muenchen, Hueysville, Kentucky, February 2017

Appalachia is fraught with conflicting and often hurtful definitions. These definitions are rooted in sweeping generalizations focused on rural poverty, mountainous isolation, subsistence agriculture, and coal mining (Oberhauser, 1995). These archetypes of Appalachian and Southern culture are not only based in a 300 year old reality, but are also void of any notion of the majority of people who actually lived there, particularly the women. In order to truly transform the old models of Appalachia and its women, Barbara Ellen Smith suggests that one of the categories must collapse, “writing women into the history of Appalachia is a contradiction in terms. Either our constructs of the region or women themselves must succumb, one to the other” (Engelhardt, 2005, p.6). This collapse is further proved in the limited scholarship bringing together feminist scholarship and Appalachian studies, despite the many calls made by prominent scholars in both fields.

Gender in the mountain South has often been defined in simple terms: as Elizabeth Engelhardt summarizes, mountain women are “fashioned from Adam’s rib, secondary and entirely compatible with the ‘mountain men’ from whom they are derived” (Engelhardt, 2005). The work and hardships that these women may have endured in order to put food on the table is forgotten, “invisible labor” as described by feminist scholars (Kaplan Daniels). However, women scholars have focused their energy on “taking back the agency that was taken from them” by sources not rooted in the region. Ronni Lundy, Appalachian activist, defined this shift in the narrative as a desire to untangle the myths that have been used to entangle us, writing a history about the people who have been ignored for so long. The challenge in the marriage between feminist scholarship and Appa-

lachian studies becomes one of framing, starting a conversation about women in Appalachia that is not dictated by stereotypes, but focused on the complicated ways that social hierarchies intersect and shape the lives of individuals (Engelhardt, 2005). Intersectionality provides a means of understanding the multivalent and multifaceted complexities of a regional identity that is both contested and celebrated.

Using a feminist perspective to examine how the intersections of structural and community power overlap can bring us closer to an understanding of these complexities. Collins and Bilge define intersectionality as “a way of understanding and analyzing the complicity in the world, in people, and in human experience” (Collins & Bilge, 2016, p.2). Intersectionality has increasingly been used to contextualize groups in their many social formations and examine the many places that work together to construct social inequality and power (Collins & Bilge, 2016). I find this approach beneficial when examining the history of poverty in Appalachia because it accounts for not only the structural forces such as industry and government, but also the social forces such as family structures and community resilience, to understand how the fate of this region has long been out of the hands of those who have spent their lives there. Intersectionality as an analytic tool can provide insight into the major axis’s of social division in a given society at a given time, for example, race, class, gender, sexuality, dis/ability, and age. These divisions often are not “discrete and mutually exclusive entities,” but build upon one another (Collins & Bilge, 2016). Using this as a framework to understand the social climate of Appalachia can highlight the many elements involved in the construction of inequality and in the multivariate ways that people respond to those conditions.

Food is an entry point into the studies of Appalachian women, both because it is integral to the cultivation and preservation of regional narratives and because it has offered a space for women to define their own authority and ownership. Gender in Appalachia has been predominately constructed in conservative terms, defining kitchen spaces, recipes, and conversations about food as the women's domain (Engelhardt, 2011). However, looking deeper at the ways in which women resisted the definitions placed on them by outside forces through the practices within the kitchen sphere can present important pieces to the history of a place. In Appalachia, the free and subsidized labor of women in coal towns not only benefitted the coal companies by insuring them with laborers, but also contributed to the stereotypes of women in the kitchen that have carried into the modern day. Towns throughout the mountains were in fact dependent on the labor of women, both for their food and their work (Oberhauser, 1995). The influence of changing cultural responsibilities affected the gendered expectations of women within their communities.

One way of understanding the dynamic practice of gender is to look at it through the lens of performance. The phrase "doing gender" was first defined by Candace West and Don Zimmerman in 1987. In the essay, West and Zimmerman complicated the relationship between sex and gender, defining sex as "what was ascribed by biology", and gender as "an achieved status", but going on to say that the "relationship between biological and cultural processes" was "complex" and "reflexive" (Frisch, 1990, p.3). They define the "doing of gender" as a "routine, methodical, and recurring accomplishment" that is done by both men and women whose "competence as members of society is hostage to its production" (Frisch, 1990, p.4). Gender is ultimately a performance that we undertake

in order to be included in a given social sphere and by which to avoid criticism by larger structures of power. One key example of “doing gender” is the act of creating and “doing family” through the production of everyday meals (DeVault). Women often do gender through food work. As West and Zimmerman suggest, we must look at gender as a reflexive process that is dependent upon the ways it is used to structure domains of “social experience” (Frisch, 1990, p.4). I will lean on the framework put forth by West and Zimmerman throughout my analysis of how gender is constructed in Appalachia.

In addition, the activity of doing gender must be situated in specific contexts, both historical and geographic. If gender is understood as a routine, then we should look beyond the fixed set of traits we often use to describe it, and examine the specific structures put in place to reinforce it. Ultimately, West and Zimmerman encourage an understanding of gender as not a set of traits, or a single variable, or a fixed role, but as a product of social doings that can change (Frisch, 1990, p.19). With this understanding, the construction of gender in Appalachia must be examined differently than the construction of gender in a more urban area. For example, Appalachian feminism is a complicated and layered experience that has as much to do with an individual’s relationship to family and land as it does to their relationship to their own identity.

Being Appalachian is not a singular experience, it is as reflective of a variety of social and dialogic processes that ultimately contribute to the way we define a regional identity. Intersectionality is a usefully research tool when looking at how Appalachian identities can function on overlapping levels. Introduced by Sojourner Truth, intersectionality is a feminist methodology used to understand people’s experiences through the categories they occupy (race, class, gender, bloodedness), but not conclude that the cate-

gory determines the extent of their experience. The goal of this approach is to emphasize the intersection of several attributes that often overlap to define an individual's experience as a member of multiple groups. Intersectionality is a useful lens through which to examine Appalachian identities because it allows us to center the experience of marginalized people and acknowledge that their identities are multifaceted (Terman, 2016). The research will lean on intersectionality to understand the many threads that weave together to make an individual's identity.

Food and Foodways

Food has always been at the heart of the Southern identity, a way to feed not only the body but also the soul. As celebrated southern culinary historian John Egerton suggests, this food-conscious culture originated in both necessity and pride. Before electricity and refrigeration, it took a true culinary magician to deliver something from the kitchen (Egerton, 1987). Food was cooked over open flame, including ingredients that were grown, processed, or produced by the same hands that cooked the meals. This invisible labor, primarily done by women, often required immense skill and patience. Food preservation was the main source of artistry for Southern dinner tables, with women become so proficient at canning and preserving that they could often duplicate the best summer dinners in the dead of winter (Egerton, 1987). A deeply rooted community, Appalachians were known for their ability to adapt with the land around them. John Egerton, recognized scholar of Southern foodways, describes the heritage of Southern food as "originated in nature, in sun and earth and water" (Egerton, 1987, p.35). Living in harmony with

the land in this way underscores the immense pride felt by inhabitants of the mountain south.

Putting up food has been an important part of the mountain diet since the techniques were first discovered. Pickling, drying, salting, smoking, spicing, burying, bleaching, sulfuring, fermenting and, of course, canning, were all techniques of preservations in the mountains, but also led to some of the greatest dishes in the region (Dabney, 1998). Jams, jellies, salt pork, chow chow, pickled bologna, and relish are just a few of the many dishes that have become staples in the southern diet. But putting up food meant more than just sustenance for people: it was also a way to support your family and community both emotionally and physically. Such labors also connected people through relations of reciprocity and sharing. Nathalie Dupree, noted Southern chef and cookbook author, noted that “putting up food for later times, putting up food to be given away, putting up food just to have, is an important tradition in the South” (Dabney, 1998). This practice, though not exclusive to only this region, evokes nostalgia for individuals to practice it as a way of connecting to recipes passed down from generations.

Of all of the forms of preservation, canning is easily the most recognizable. Canning for many families in the South offered a means for not only surviving the cold winter months, but also served as a way for women to supplement their household income. Many mountain women traded cans for everything from visits to the midwife or doctor, to offerings from visiting merchants (Lundy, 2016). In some instances, selling canned goods afforded women economic freedom to be put towards additional needs in the household, or for a treat for themselves (Christensen, 2015). Now canning is considered the most sacred and respected of all the Southern culinary traditions, with Southern Ap-

palachia being the heart, because of its ability to evoke nostalgia for place and people (Dabney, 1998). Prior to the introduction of Mason jars, women primarily used crocks and other earthen jars to put up fruits and vegetables with honey or sugar used as sweeteners (Dabney, 1998). Mason jars were introduced in 1857 (Ferris), and brought new level of safety to the process and allowed women to begin selling the products they created within their communities.

While food preservation was an integral part of the Appalachian food identity, it was definitively a form of gendered labor. It is clear that while men may have contributed to the practices, the work was associated with women such that their status in the community was often shaped by their abilities in the kitchen. The major portion of food from the 1800s to post-World War II was “put up” (Egerton, 1987). As kitchen equipment evolved and refrigeration and pressure cookers were introduced, the more rustic ways of preserving began to fade. As more industrial employment entered the region and men’s labor fluctuated based on mining and other opportunities, women’s work changed. This introduced both the ability and the pressure for women to leave the household for paid labor, complicating their relationship to the kitchen, and presenting an increased availability of processed foods. Understanding this timeline and the processes that influence the shift away from the domestic sphere can illuminate how cooking is more complex than obligation and victimization. Examining the relationship between women and food can illuminate the ways that women have forged spaces within their oppression (Avakian, 2005). Cooking, eating, and sharing for women throughout the world have been windows into maintaining history and place. Cooking served as a space for creativi-

ty, sensuality, nurturance, love; claiming or reclaiming rituals around food, or creating new ones that revised personal and collective histories (Avakian, 2005).

As the landscape of American cuisine changes to meeting the constantly changing cultural and social standards, certain styles of cooking move into the spotlight. The term “foodscape” has been used in the study of cultural anthropology to understand the “multiplicity of sites where food is displayed for purchase and where it may be consumed” (Jackson, 2013). The elements of a foodscape are largely influenced by specific places, and people and their relationship to certain cuisines. Foodies, people with a “longstanding passion for eating and learning about food but who are not food professionals” (Cairns, Johnson, and Baumann, 2010), are the major influencers of the American “foodscape.” Introducing a cuisine into the “foodscape” can have a role in establishing symbolic boundaries and status distinctions, often obscuring the ecological original and social implications of the way food is produced and consumed (Johnson & Baumann, 2015).

Within the last decade, the idea of a “New Southern Food Movement” has been a key marker of the shifting understanding of Southern and Appalachian cuisine. According to Kelting, the “New Southern Food Movement” can be seen as the “foodie-fiction” of a long unsung foodway (Kelting, 2016) – such a process often involves the erasure of the difficult elements of history in favor of a romantic, nostalgic representation. Marcie Cohen Ferris describes this saying,

“the southern history embedded in southern food has somehow disappeared. In contemporary worlds of popular and consumer culture, southern food has become untethered from the complex historical narrative responsible for this cuisine. Think buckets of southern fried chicken and cathead biscuits like culinary spacecraft set adrift from the mother ship of southern history, culture, and experience. A multi-layered past and present underlies these foods and explains why southerners eat the way they do, and why we think of these foods as deeply southern. Food *is* history. Food *is* place. Food *is* power *and* disempowerment.” (Ferris, 2015)

As Kelting writes, to many longtime chefs and food writers, the “New South” focuses on a trendy, hip, and whitewashed version of Southern food (Edge & Wey, 2016). As a regional variation of Southern culture, Appalachian food is on track to be the next “foodie-fied” cuisine. This goes in both directions, to commercial food and to artisanal cuisine. Food trend experts point to the way Appalachian food is turning up on fast casual restaurant menus and prepared food products (Badaracco, 2014)

On the “high” end, examples include the national media celebration of chefs like Sean Brock and Edward Lee, who have gained acclaim for their interpretations of food in the mountains. In some cases, the interest in the cuisine of Appalachia and the South is rooted in a search for authenticity, a descriptor frequently used to determine the ethnic food most deserving of praise and celebration (Arbaca, 2004). In the analysis of cuisine and place, the concept of authenticity is deeply problematic, depending on who is defining it. Abarca suggests that authenticity in cooking is “real, actual, genuine as opposed to imagined” (Arbaca, 2004). However, attaching the word authenticity to a cuisine or dish can reinforce racial and class based stratifications. Often the foods or cuisines deemed as “authentic” romanticize “tradition,” inscribing racial-ethnic tropes or gendered labor as a necessity for realization. For example, the celebration of southern cuisine has engendered strong debates about the origins of agricultural products, cooking skills, and culinary ownership and its relationship to the history of slavery and segregation (Twitty, 2015). Additionally, many of the people who benefit from the celebration of cuisine are white and male.

At the same time, authenticity is also often tied up with taking ownership of food production and culinary skills. DIY and artisanal practices can be framed as a form of reaction and resistance to industrial food systems, such that preserved food preparation becomes a key area of alternative practice and entangled in questions of authenticity. The cultural renaissance occurring in Appalachian food preservation and other DIY movements is problematic to larger definitions of female food labor and does not consider the necessity that many of these practices had to the survival of families and communities. As Christensen suggests, the interest in canning – as well as its evolution into a trend-- has grown out of the alternative food movements because of people’s desire to control the food that they eat and move away from the problems of industrially produced food (Christensen, 2015). This is driven more by a desire to address current conditions than an awareness of the history of such food practices, such as the role that preservation played in both survival and cultivation of Appalachian foodways. Late summer canning, as described by one sharecropper’s wife, was “a woman’s hardest time” (Christensen, 2015). At the same time, the responsibilities of tending the house, family, and garden encouraged rural women to find creativity in their daily lives.

The question is how to re-inscribe some of the power and meaning of women’s household food labors without romanticizing it or, at the other extreme, representing it as a form of oppression linked only to poverty rather than resilience. Additionally, examining these spaces and the values that women attached to them are crucial to understanding the cultural history of a place or community.

Feeding Family and Community: Food Preservation as a Response to Economic Struggle

Lori Gearheart came to Hueysville, Kentucky with her family in the hopes of starting a homestead. The town of Hueysville is small, a hardware store, a post office, and lawyer's office dot the windy road leading up to the Gearheart farm. I'm lost, which is a normal occurrence in Eastern Kentucky, confused by road signs or the lack thereof. When I finally find their street I drive slowly, admiring the multiple garden plots and two large brown horses that are penned close enough to the road that I could reach out and touch their warm noses. The sun is bright and warm, illuminating the double wides and the tin roofs that make up the neighborhood.

I meet Lori outside of her neighbor's house. It's a small white house with a porch that is twice the size of the house. She greets me with a warm smile and a hug, explaining that her house isn't built yet so she thought we would meet at her Granny's house.

"That there is Granny's root cellar," Lori says, pointing to the house front that is built into the side of the hill. It looks small from the outside, maybe the size of a garden shed, but when she opens the door the space doubles in size. Inside the space is lined with shelves set deep into the mountain and holding the remnants of years of putting up. Pickled beans, canned tomatoes, peaches, sauerkraut, beets, corn, and even a few paw paws. I let out an audible gasp as I step into the cellar, overwhelmed by the amount of time and skill put into the food lining the walls. I had never seen anything like this, though I learned throughout my interviews that this was a normal basement decoration in Appalachian households. Lori giggles at my excitement and invites me inside for some lunch and conversation.

Lori Gearheart, Hueysville, Kentucky, February 2017

In order to understand the reasons why Appalachians participate in food preservation requires an understanding of the economic history of the region. Most notable of the themes used to define Appalachia is culture of poverty (Billings, 1974) (Elam, 2002). Certainly, Michael Harrington's *The Other Americans*, which focused on the rural poverty in America in the post WWII period, was a major catalyst in defining the region as neglected and deprived, but in subsequent years, the culture of poverty thesis has been used to explain the persistence of poverty and a lifestyle supposedly adapted to such conditions. However, such descriptions have been debated and contested by writers and scholars since their application to an entire people and region. At the same time, they have become the basis of ongoing and entrenched stereotypes about people and their economic livelihoods.

Poverty has been defined as the archeology of “the inarticulate,” or those individuals or groups who were not written about in the chronicles of the past (Barnes, 2011). Appalachia has been walled off literally by the mountains, and figuratively by the structures working against the people. Early descriptions were defined against the statistical measures of poverty, deeming the area backward and underdeveloped both materially and culturally (Eller, 2008). Early local color writers visited Appalachia and returned with harmful caricatures that became the image of a hillbilly that are still circulated throughout the media today.

Most specifically, these characterizations took deep root in 1964 when President Lyndon B Johnson declared a “War on Poverty” (Lowery, 2014). This endeavor was introduced at the height of the post World War II American Dream fueled values of success and achievement. To those who had pulled themselves out of a post war depression, images of poverty and failure gave them something to juxtapose against. President Johnson visited many declining coal communities throughout Appalachia, meeting with unemployed families, making promises of equal rights, with an army of photojournalists in tow (Eller, 2015). The images from this visit circulated widely throughout the media and began the process of othering that fueled the cultural imagination of how residents of Appalachia looked and behaved.

The outward appearance and the internal structural issues of Appalachia have presented two historical narratives. On the one hand, The War on Poverty created an influx of resources and programming aimed at benefitting the economic future of Appalachians, but as Eller points out, it also illuminated a weak system which afforded entrepreneurs and industries space to tap into the land and resources available (Eller, 2008). For many

Appalachians, their land was their most valuable possession, providing them with food, shelter, and a reverence for the Earth. This relationship is a paradox in the American landscape, “a rich land inhabited by poor people” (Eller, 2008). Land ownership was and continues to be a social, political, and economic power, especially in regions like Appalachia where economic, social, and political stability are hard to come by (Barnes, 2011). Mountain residents have always had a deep relationship to the land, often shown through strong family ties and understanding of place and community. People continued their practices regardless of the structural changes in economic opportunities that were brought on by industrial capitalism. For some people, this meant continued poverty. For others, it meant developing practices that help create a resilient culture. Despite the characterizations by government and media proponents of the war on poverty, it appeared that the region’s poor were not lazy, unwilling, participants, but victims of exploitation and boom and bust development (Glen, 1989). The upshot of this history is that poverty and economic parity were more complicated than the stereotypes allowed for – indeed, the resourcefulness of food preservation, culinary construction, and survival for these residents is rendered invisible by the analysis of success based on participation in a wage labor economy of industrial production.

Becky wears vegetable leggings. She tells me she’s nervous because she’s not used to talking about herself, a trait that comes up often in my interview. We both pull out of notes and then laugh at the formality of it. I ask her about what it was like to grow up in Knott county, she pauses for a long time before explaining that her family didn’t talk about the past so she doesn’t really know. I sense the tension in her answer and wait to ask for clarification. She goes on to tell me that putting up food was a late addition to her food identity after finding out her son had a heart condition. There is comfort for her in knowing exactly what goes into her food, a sense of control that goes beyond keeping her child healthy, but what I sense has to do with something that was missing in her childhood.

Becky has a passion for local food that is inspiring and expansive. Food preservation led her to gardening, which led her to farming, which led her to homesteading, which will hopefully lead her to her goal of opening a farm-to-table restaurant. In Appalachia, a region not thought of as fertile farmland, having young people on the ground doing the work of connecting farmers to revenue streams is essential. Becky is ready to get her hands dirty. I leave the interview with a case of various canned items from her pantry which fuels the rest of my research.

Rebecka Fugate, Hindman Kentucky, February 2017

Understanding what makes Appalachian food requires a critical look at race, class, and gender in the mountain South, as one cannot exist without the other. As mentioned previously, the make-up of the regions included in this study is predominantly white alone, with nearly 98% in all three counties (Census, 2016). In that way, the meanings of food within the region shift and change overtime, though the collective understanding is often rooted in times of collision (Engelhardt, 2011, Ferris, 2014). As extraction industries expanded in the industrial era of the early 1900s, Appalachian foodways adapted and changed. As the demand for miners increased, coal companies began to target workers outside of the region. With an influx of workers from a wider range of places, Appalachia became more of a cultural melting pot. “Between 1820 and 1920, more than 60,000 Italians, Hungarians, Austrians, Russians, Poles and other immigrants settled in the Appalachian coalfields” (Simon, 2014). This influx of workers made up more than 40 percent of the workforce, on top of the already present African American community that had been brought in with the slave trade. The diversity that was and still is present within Appalachia goes against much of the stereotype of Appalachia as a strictly white Anglo-Saxon region.

Creating the Hillbilly: Misrepresentations in Appalachian Food

Janet's hair is a wave of blonde ringlets that frame her soft face. She calls me honey and darling and I feel as if I've known her all my life. She tells me she's just spent the day with her mother, a much needed break after a week of substitute teaching. When she speaks of her mother, her eyes light up. I think of my own mother. Appalachia is a society made up of mothers, and grandmothers, and godmothers. Even the mountains hold me tight like the arms of my own mother.

Janet tells me she's never been political in her life, that she's never even voted for that matter. But this year was different. She saw the claims to bring back coal jobs to Appalachia and knew what that really meant. In Appalachia, coal is king, providing jobs and security to families throughout the region, but also created a dependency that hindered any economic diversification. Janet is the Letcher county farmers market manager, as well as an educator and a community leader. She believes strongly that food could be part of the economic future of Appalachia, and that coal could not. That is what compels her to do her work, and that is what compels her to stay in the mountains.

Janet Kincer, Hindman Kentucky. March 2017

Despite the resurgence of “low country cuisine” that can be seen on the pages of Bon Appetite, there are still deeply rooted stereotypes surrounding the types of food that people in the mountains eat. An early example is the soft drink Mountain Dew, a high sugar and high caffeine soda that was marketed directly to people living in the mountains. Originally a mountain slang term for moonshine, Mountain Dew was created in the 1930s by two Tennessee boys, Barney and Ally Hartman (Baird, 2015). Now owned by Pepsi Co, Mountain Dew is the cause of one of the cruelest mountain stereotypes, the gum and tooth disease common in Appalachia known as “Mountain Dew Mouth” (Barclay, 2013). If you've ever seen the original label for this beverage, you can understand why it has been associated with Appalachia, displaying a “hillbilly shooting at a Revenoo'r as he exits from the outhouse” with the phrase “It'll tickle yore innards running along the skyline (Harris, 2009, p.60). The phrase “Mountain Dew Mouth” was coined in the 2009 Diane Sawyer special, *Children of the Mountains*, in which Sawyer went to Eastern Kentucky to examine the “forgotten” poverty (Baird, 2015). However, none of the reports claiming that Appalachians have higher consumptions of Mountain Dew have considered

the reasons why this might be occurring. Post coal mining environmental damage have reeked havoc on the drinking water in Eastern Appalachia, economic stagnation has put many individuals out of work, causing them to not have the resources to pay for dental checkups or fillings, and a history of drug abuse and depression has lead people to place their own health on the back burner. Instead of thinking critically about how and why poverty has persisted in Appalachia, we once again are faced with a narrative that centers around individuals being unable to “get out of their own way” (Baird, 2015), who are lacking the motivation or knowledge to know better, without considering how to change the larger factors causing people in the region to make these choices.

The sky is bright blue over the mountains as I turn onto the Main street of Whitesburg, Kentucky. Nell and Bev are seated back to back in the window filled office of the Mountain Air project. The both look up from their computers when I enter, smiling big when I introduce myself. Nell and Bev have been friends and colleagues for years, both working hard to provide Appalachian communities with fair healthcare opportunities. I meet with them separately, but their stories align in many ways.

Nell grew up outside of Whitesburg and has worked within her community for practically her whole life. She is an inspiring woman, with a voice that uplifts the struggles and stories of her community members. She speaks to activism and community building and the network of women who raised her and taught her to be a woman. She is fierce and gentle all at the same time.

Bev has a laugh that fills a room, infectious in it's carefree echo. She talks to me about the happenings of Whitesburg and how people are responding to the news of a neo-Nazi group holding a rally in a neighboring town as she spoons up her lentil soup. When it's time to record, Bev lights up with an enthusiasm and passion for her garden and her local farmers market. She tells me story after story, laughing and smiling through each one. She has a sensitivity and understanding of the mountains that is inspiring.

I hug Nell and Bev tightly before I leave, upset to end our time together, but excited to see where their projects take them. The sun is setting over the mountains as I turn out of Whitesburg and head home.

Nell Fields and Bev May, Whitesburg Kentucky, March 2017

Themes of Analysis

With this backdrop of gender, geography, economic history, and stereotyping, I explore themes in the nine interviews I did with residents of this region, focusing on how food and food preservation was both materially and symbolically a means of constructing regional identity despite the obstacles to self determination. The three main themes I pulled from these oral histories were about self-sufficiency and subsistence; the relationship between gender and structures of power; and the importance of connection to land and place. In analyzing these themes, I hope this narrative uncovers some of the complexity and variety in ways that people approach their regional identities through food preservation practices that tie them to a place-based set of traditions. In doing this work, I was drawn to ways of framing people's experiences and yet I am reluctant to impose them too heavily onto the stories I was told. Nevertheless, both resistance and resilience emerged as important ideas in the narratives related to life in Appalachia.

Resistance suggests taking control of one's life and working against the control of outside forces. Resistance has always been a theme present in the mountains, from the decision of early settlers to make a home along the streams that run down from the towering mountains, to the social justice efforts of activists like Helen Matthews Lewis who fought against gender, racial, and class discriminations in Appalachia in the early 1940s, to the tireless efforts of organizations like Kentuckians for the Commonwealth and Appalshop who are creating jobs and spaces for young Appalachians to participate in the future of the region. Resistance has come in many forms in Appalachia, from picket lines to picket fences. Here, I see food preservation as a contributing factor to the resistance of outside control of food sources and preparation. The interviews I collected highlight the importance of maintaining a connection to the land that is felt throughout Appalachia.

Many of the women spoke of the mountains like another member of their family, a mother who provided them with nourishment and safety and to whom they provided reverence and care.

Similarly, the idea of resilience emerged frequently, a term I came to understand as the ability to recover quickly from difficulties. Both resistance and resilience operate in the food work of contemporary Appalachian women. Resistance describes the constant fight that Appalachians have put up against capitalist and oppressive systems taking control of their lives, while resilience is the process by which Appalachians have bounced back from the many losses they have felt to outside forces.

Keeping Your Pantry Full: Self sufficiency and Labor

[Jennifer Wilson]: If you didn't know how to can and garden and you were Appalachian, you brought shame to your people. I think anybody can benefit from just having things available to them when you need them.

Self sufficiency was common throughout Appalachia, from subsistence farming to community networks, and a prominent theme in the interviews. Looking at people's descriptions of their work, self-sufficiency meant, being able to use what you have to make the best possible life for you and your family. To these women, the main reason for practicing food preservation was to provide your family with food for the winter, or in case of hard times. For most Appalachian families, knowing how to can and preserve food was the only way they would survive the winters. Grocery stores were not accessible and often involved traveling long distances through treacherous mountains.

[Debbie Ruffett] Transportation was an issue...they all lived on farms so the ground was readily available to them.

The same sentiment was echoed by Nell.

[Nell Fields] you know, in those days, I probably didn't come into Whitesburg but four or five times until I started school up here at the high school, as you know being in school and riding a bus into town. And even at that to be able to just come and be in town was very very rare, for me to get to do that as a young teenager even. So if you were out in the community areas in the more rural parts of Letcher and any of the counties in Eastern Kentucky, you learned to depend on yourself and rely on yourself and that included with food. The food sources, that was another reason why it was such a needed and successful kind of practice that we have in the mountains, you know canning and preserving our own foods. Even in the 50s and 60s, and before that I'm sure it was even greater needs. I mean you had to provide your own food sources, nobody brought it to you. And you couldn't go someplace and buy it, you had to provide for it.

Both Nell and Debbie are speaking to one of the main threads of rural life, working with what you have. Growing food was an obvious choice for Appalachians because the ground, unlike the county stores, was free to use and it would provide enough food to feed a large family year round if you knew how to use it. When Nell says, "you learned to depend on yourself and rely on yourself," she is speaking to the resilience that Appalachians practiced in their everyday lives. In the early 50s and 60s, the mines were one of the few sources of income for families, but they required hard work and little security. So mountain families worked with what they had, and put up food to resist being solely dependent on coal companies to ensure their livelihood.

[Janet] Why we did it was, well it was cheaper. You don't count your labor in it when it feeds you, I guess is the best way to put it. And then again you knew what was in it. That's the importance of what you knew. You knew what you grew and if you put it back that you would have it that winter. With the mines being as cyclical as they were, you knew you always had food. We didn't have a smoke, my grandparents had a smokehouse, but we would smoke and salt hams and kill pigs. That was just, you know, once frost came on you killed a pig.

But with subsistence living came hard labor and lots of time. Putting up enough food for a family to eat for the winter required harvesting and producing in large quantities. It was during these times that families or hollers came together to engage in the labor together, leaning on the hands of many to get the job done.

[Lori Gearheart] you know, we would spend weeks at a time canning everything that came out of our garden because that's all we had to eat in the winter. She said you didn't let things rot in the garden or you didn't have a grocery store to go to. Um, Aunt Sue said that there were three grocery stores in the area, but you went and you got your flour and your salt and your meal, cornmeal, and a little bit of sugar. And then they'd have fabrics, but everything else had to come out of your garden. There was no canned tomatoes or juices or jellies. You didn't buy those at the grocery store, you put those up yourselves. Aunt Sue is 75 and she said she was no desire to do that now because it's just so cheap and easy to go to the grocery store and to pick up what she needs every week. But gosh, if that wasn't available, you'd have to pull upon their memories and old recipes and stuff.

Lori is describing the experiences of her Granny Ruffett and her sisters who, as she described, did not have the luxury of groceries stores to rely on. This is obvious for anyone

who has lived rurally, even today; however, in modern society we often do not plan meals a full season in advance because we are able to go to the grocery store when we need something. This was not possible in early Appalachia, when roads and mountain crossings were rare and took multiple days.

[Malcolm Wilson] My Granny's name was Vanover, married name was Vanover. Like I said she was a Ritchie, but she married Jack Vanover. She canned massive amounts of things. Beans and pickled corn and just pickles of every sort and fashioned. Pepper relishes, chow chow, kraut, cabbage, tomatoes. You know, we always had just cans and cans of tomatoes. Just about anything she grew in the garden, any vegetable, although I never remember, I know you can can potatoes, I don't ever remember canning potatoes. She always kept her potatoes by diggin a big hole in the ground and you put a layer of potatoes and a layer of straw and all through the winter you had potatoes. So you'd go in the basement, in the cellar, take off a layer of straw, and get you some potatoes. Keep going down until spring or summer and you know. So that's how we kept potatoes and my dad did the same thing. You know, when she grew potatoes she gave them to mom and dad so dad, I remember under our first house we had a tater pit is what we called it, that we kept potatoes in.

Nearly everyone I interviewed mentioned the quantities canned during the end of the summer season. There was a lot of ingenuity involved in these processes, from the growing of the food to the preserving of it. As Malcolm mentions, families found many different ways of keeping a steady supply of food throughout the winter months, whether by canning, salting, pickling, or fermenting. These processes were almost always done by the women, often large groups of women because of the prodigious labor and time it entailed to put up enough of the harvest to subsist on it on the off season. The idea of hav-

ing a pantry full was both a symbol of a good winter to come, but also a symbol of status of success for the women that did the bulk of the work.

[Jennifer Wilson] I think it's just basically the main reason anybody did, especially back in that time was to have a pantry full. Things that you could go to, I mean that's why we do it now cause you know you don't want to buy-- you don't want to feel like you have to buy everything. We're not exactly convenient to a store, even where we are. Sure I pass through the city every day on my way home from work, but I like to know that I can make things if I need to. I can make my laundry detergents, I can make Dr. Bronner's soap, I can make... It gives me a really good feeling.

The ability to provide for your family was often one of the most important elements of being a woman in the mountains, especially when they were unable to gain paid work and provide a monetary income for the family. The labor required just to feed a family was sometimes more than the labor involved in the few jobs that existed in the mountains. Because the stereotypes of rural poverty focused on wage labor and the lack of it for most adults, the invisible and unpaid labor of food preparation was often ignored. At the same time, this major effort was what often helped families survive, a form of resilience that was not accounted for in the industrial definitions of poverty.

[Nell Fields] People in poverty in the 60s, people that lived in poverty a lot of times were looked at as being poor and being lazy. The lazy poor. If you were poor, the less resources you had and the less money you had, the harder you had to work. Every effort every day to get up and be clothed, to eat, and to be sheltered, you had to work at. Whether it was you carried water, you carried wood and coal to warm your houses and to cook your food. Every effort is so much greater when you're poor, and still is if people could see that. And on top of those kinds of things, the good thing in them days as compared to now is that the neigh-

bors helped each other, depended on each other and enjoyed doing those things for each other. And now because it comes in the form of dollars, it's kind of lost it's meaning. I think if people who worry and complain about welfare and food stamp programs, if they could see themselves as 'would you give that child a bowl of food', well yeah I would do that in a heartbeat. But because it's dollars now, seems like it's taken a whole ugly image of it. Why should we keep giving money to them lazy people? And so that, to me, is a big part of the warped sense of it and one of the reasons that we may be getting away from our neighborliness or whatever I'm trying to say here, you know, a neighborly kind of interactions have been taken out of the picture.

Nell spoke at length about the misconception of poverty in Appalachia and how hard it was just to live day to day.

[Nell Fields] The work never stops. And like I said, the poorer you were, the harder it was because you wouldn't have enough food to last you all winter and it's going to look like you're lazy if you didn't have enough food. My family didn't have running water until after I got married, my mother didn't. So we had to go carry water from a spring or some people had a well, and you brought it in and you had to boil and you had to wash the jars and then you had to scold them. And then you had to prepare the food, which had to be washed and cleaned which needed more water. And then you would have to, you know, the family members, most of the time mom and older daughters were busy putting food in the jars or stringing, you know the beans had to be strung and the apples had to be peeled, and either you dried them or you would can them and put things in the smoke-house, you know, because that was where you were gonna eat from in the winter. So all summer long you worked in order to live through the winter.

Poverty is complicated and often stems from more than one cause. In Appalachia, there was a lot of insecurity both in terms of jobs and the ability for families to rely on a steady

income from year to year. In the wake of this constant insecurity, being able to grow and control the process of putting food on the table was sometimes all that individuals had.

[Janet] You don't count your labor in it when it feeds you, I guess is the best way to put it. And then again you knew what was in it. That's the importance of what you knew. You knew what you grew and if you put it back that you would have it that winter. With the mines being as cyclical as they were, you knew you always had food. We didn't have a smoke, my grandparents had a smokehouse, but we would smoke and salt hams and kill pigs. That was just, you know, once frost came on you killed a pig.

Janet is speaking to the consistency that came from growing and preserving food. It provided families and communities with a structure that they could rely on even when other parts of their lives weren't as reliable. Bev takes this one step further by presenting the sense of responsibility that came with growing and preserving food.

[Bev] They put up out in the garden and put us to labor about the time we could walk and that was just part of the deal. I remember and I think there's a lot of good lessons I got from in the garden, I remember I did not like peas, not the nice sweet peas we have now the crispy peas, the ones you had to shell out. I remember being very young and saying 'I don't understand why I have to pick peas I am not gonna eat these peas, I don't like peas why do I have to be out here pickin these peas', and my mother said 'honey, life is not a bowl of cherries, pick the peas'. So it was a great lesson in this is what you have to do in this family, this is the deal. You've gotta do labor that helps everybody even if you don't like peas

When food was scarce, there wasn't time to be picky. This was also present in terms of labor and the responsibility that family members had to being a part of the process of putting up food. Not only is this an example of resisting the control of outside forces, but it

also an excellent example of the resilience that families had to move forward with their lives despite the hardships.

Doing Gender

[Debbie Ruffet] It was always the girls in the kitchen. The guys were outside and the girls were inside. That was kinda woman's work. They (family) really appreciated them but they kind of almost expected it.

The expectation that Debbie is referring to is a process through which gender is constructed. Doing gender, in this context, is reinforced by the expectation that women would always provide a warm meal. The kitchen space becomes a place of performance and identity building for women, some of who took pride in their ability to feed a large family.

Ownership of space was a prominent theme throughout the interviews. Nearly all of the women remarked on how the kitchen space was dominated by women, juxtaposed against the field or farm, which often went to the hands of men. Space is an important element to analyze because it can shed light on how things were valued in different communities.

[Debbie Ruffet] It was just all centered in the kitchen. That's where everything took place. That's where you talked about things, that's where decisions were made. That's where you grieved sometimes, or convalesced, or you know, you bring the new baby in to meet your grandma and she sits at the table. It's just kitchen driven, our whole socialization has just been kitchen driven I think.

The kitchen became a gathering place for most families. Sometimes this was because the houses weren't multiple rooms and the kitchen was joined with what we would describe as the living room. However, it is also likely that the presence of food or cooking drew people in and made them linger within the space with the most activity. For women, this was been a special power not afforded to men. Family and community were at the root of

how Appalachia has remained a resilient region because they created a network that would help each other in times of need. The kitchen became the birthplace of many of these connections, a space that was dominated by the female.

[Bev May] I think that food is a way that women, food production is a way women feel valued, I don't know if it always worked out to make you be valued. You know, sometimes it can be just pure drudgery that isn't appreciated, it just all depends what family you're in. And I do think it's a source of community because that whole thing of, if someone is down sick or if there's a funeral or whatever or a new baby, you take food. And everybody knows that Janie Justice, for example, is gonna bring her top notch chicken casserole, you know, and that is her place in the community and the place that she knows. That is her entry way to know she is gonna be appreciated and valued, so yeah that's pretty important.

What Bev is speaking to in this quote is the many forms power can come in depending on what the women needs to feel valued. Devault suggests that we should distinguish between conditions where one has responsibility for an activity versus where one has control over an activity (Devault, 1991). Many of the examples pulled from these interviews present circumstances where the women have some control over the process because it provides them with status among other community members. For this reason, women's gender performance is a form of power. In this situation, the woman might take the most pride and power from being named for making the best chicken casserole.

Multifaceted responsibility to the family was another theme I found within the performance of gender. Often women not only took care of the house and family, but they also needed to work outside of the home for wages. The pressure for women to provide for their families monetarily was heightened as the coal industry became mechanized and more men were laid off from work (Portelli, 2012). When this happened, it became the responsibility of the women to provide for the family in every way. Many of the

women I spoke to mentioned that their mothers worked full time on top of caring for them.

[Jennifer Wilson] It's so amazing because my mom had COPD and she died at 58, but she worked full time, our house was spotless, and there was a home cooked meal everyday. I swear as I sit here right now I have no idea, I don't know how she did it. Because I can't do it, but she-- but the baking and the canning, I mean she'd make these little sugar Easter eggs with dioramas inside of them made out of icing. And she did it because she loved to give them away, you know. It goes back to that. She loved to share.

[Rebecca Fugate] People always assume that canning is an inconvenience and that's why they don't want to do it. So people are shocked when I say I work, I raise three kids, and I can. And that it's not an inconvenience. They're really shocked and ask me how and talk more about it. But it, hearing the lids sealing, you know. It's just a great feeling 'oh it worked'. And every time I feel that. It don't matter how many times I can, I still feel I just get a smile whenever I hear them popping. If I do it late in the evenings I'll lay in bed and sit and count them as I hear them. It's ridiculous. It's just so much pleasure to provide your family with real fresh food, and you know what's in there, and you don't have to worry about it. You know, and it lasts a long time. It just makes you feel good in general.

[Nell Fields] I mean it was a source of pride and strength. When you went a visited women a lot of times you went first by their cellar where they could show you how many jars of jelly they did yesterday, you know. Yeah the canning and preserving was a really really important to women, that was their strength as a women in being able to be a homemaker and a good wife and a mother was to show that you were doing what you could to provide for your family. So it was a source of strength and empowerment and it made, I think, I definitely feel like that women really almost cared more than their share of strengthening the culture of the people of Appalachia, because of that because it did require such extra efforts.

Again these are examples of how women in Appalachia draw pride and empowerment within their community and family networks. As Nell mentions, their strength as women came from their ability to be good wives and homemakers. This expression of

self is essential to understanding gender as a form of both conformity and resistance. Women who did this work were resisting being defined as non-productive workers and less valuable than men who worked in coal. They were resilient in that they could juggle paid and unpaid labor in creating family.

Understanding the experiences of men informs the understanding of women and the ways that gender is reinforced in different communities. I had the opportunity to interview one man Malcolm, who was also interested in food preservation. Malcolm explained how expectations of men differed from that of women:

Emeran: Do you know why the men didn't cook as much?

Malcolm Wilson: Well, I have opinions. I don't know why, I can't tell you why but I have opinions. It wasn't a manly thing to do, number one. And back then women didn't have jobs, you know, I'm talking my grandma and grandpas era. Of course my mom worked later in life, at first she was a housewife as well. But the men worked and the women took care of the house, so I think that was a part of it. Other thing, I don't think men ever took the time to learn, there was always somebody there to do it for them so why did they have to learn? You know, if there's somebody there to do it for you, you know. Their aunts cooked and their grannies cooked and their moms cooked and their wives cooked and, so they're not gonna cook. Around the holidays, I think it was probably a form of self expression. But the rest of the time it was a job they enjoyed doing. It gave them purpose in life. It wasn't a lot different than my papaw going to the coal mines and sayin' 'this is what I do'. I think they're very similar. My grandfather enjoyed the mines and my grandmother somewhat enjoyed cooking.

The idea that cooking and caring for the home was as much of a job as going to the coal mines everyday highlights the differences in how gender was constructed and reinforced. The division of labor was how individuals cultivated their identities and created boundaries and expectations among their community networks. A few of the women I spoke to

also mentioned this division of labor between men and women and how it reinforced certain expectations.

[Nell Fields]: The kind of work that men did and the kind of work that women did were different but they were all very important to the people that lived in Appalachia and to the strength that women were able to develop into as strong community leaders. I totally feel like that was probably the only strength I did have was knowing that I was capable, as a young mother, to cook and clean and preserve food for my children because I learned it as a child and I learned it, you know, it's just a part of my environment. So it's totally a great source of, a great confidence builder, and an empowering way of living your life. People that contribute to the good of anybody feel empowered I think.

Nell is speaking to the divisions of labor that were present throughout Appalachia, but is also highlighting how valued women felt within their roles. This, again, is an example of the ways that resilience was cultivated throughout Appalachia. You worked within your means and used what you had to cultivate empowerment.

Most importantly, however, is the way that the women I interviewed described their own mothers and grandmothers.

[Janet] Everything I am I owe to my mom. Tough. Appalachian women are tough, they are. They are incredibly tough. They are the glue of the family. They hold everything together. They have an immense amount of wealth, whether it is book learned or not. They're tough. You know, as far as cooking, I never, when I got older I used recipes, but the initial things, no. You learned by practice and you learned by doing and you got lots of practice because you ate, every day. You wanted to know how to make good cornbread from scratch, you wanted to know how to make good biscuits from scratch without a recipe. Canning, I learned everything. Jams, jellies, beans, whatever we put up, I learned from her.

The process of passing down knowledge is a tool for building community and collective identity both as Appalachians and as Appalachian women. In academia, the validation of regional history and culture has been solidified through the establishment of the

field of Appalachian studies, which has become a platform through which to understand the meaning of being Appalachian. In recent years, the analysis of women's lives and labors have become important to Appalachian studies in order to document the diversity of women and their experiences. While race, class, and other markers of social identity complicated the experiences, the systematic study of domestic resilience in Appalachia must foreground gender while also insisting on its intersections with other categories of power and identity (Englehardt, 2008). The 'female agency' expressed by the many women I interviewed showcases the many ways women build their identity. Examining women's agency around material practices can help challenge the oppressive and entrapping stereotypes that are often perpetuated about the region.

Land and Place

While gender was one important theme that touched on material experience, the broadest based and concrete issue was that of land. Land was of most valuable things a family could own in Appalachia. Prior to industrialization, individuals lived on the land, using it to provide for their family and communities. Some consider this to be a response to early settler's interactions with the Native Americans (Eller, 2008), and the reference they had to the mountains. However, this connection has not always worked in favor of Appalachians. As Nell Fields describes, the seclusion that comes from the mountains has led to skewed outsider views.

[Nell Fields] I mean from Daniel Boone days on people traveled into the mountains, they were at risk. From wild animals and the exposure and those kinds of things... When I think of the people that I come from, when I think of my relatives and the people that I knew, what was in their heart, it's a joyous feeling to know that they loved everybody, they were opened to everybody. They would talk about you all day long, but they would defend you with their life. It was just close

knit families and neighbors. Neighbors helping neighbors. You were related whether there was blood relations or not, you were relative to each other because of our needs to survive. We helped each other and the struggles that people went through, you know in a community as they still do, but then you were needed so much more. The conveniences that we have today, I mean you can't even, children today could never really comprehend what it was like to grow up when you couldn't just drive into town and get something to eat. Even here in these mountains. People in Appalachia though, a lot of the times, have been portrayed as being clannish and off to themselves, overall one on one when you go to people's doors, you're gonna get the benefit of the doubt. More than not. It's just a part of our culture of being friendly and being caring and open. I mean I grew up at a time when, and it's not just me and my family but many other families that I was aware of and still talk to my friends about, your door was open. If a stranger needed a bed to sleep in, you would get out of the bed and let him sleep. That was kind of the lay of the land for the people in the mountains. That's just how you lived your life, and that's still a big carry over, we still have those really big, wonderful, open hearts with people we work with.

The land was the major factor for how people created community and connection with one another. They lived in tight networks because that was the only way they could survive. This, of course, influenced the practices of food production and preservation which was largely done as a community network. The labor was done by the women because the husbands would often be working in the mines during the week. The coal industry radically changed the connection that Appalachians had to the land they owned or lived on. Often coal companies would uproot families to coal camps which were communities owned completely by the companies (Eller, 2008). Coal also changed the family structure, sending the men away for days at a time and leaving the women to handle the home and family.

[Rebecca Fugate] My father was a coal miner and my mother never worked. She was a stay at home. They were divorced so we just went back and forth, that lifestyle. My dad was gone all the time, working in the coal mines. We

never saw any of them until late in the evening. They were always gone, they would come home around supper time and usually went straight to bed they were so tired. It was a regular thing though, I remember digging through my dad's lunch. Me and my brother would fight over who got the leftover Nutter Butter out of his lunch, the leftover snack.

The labor of the home was entirely in the hands of the mothers and grandmothers, as Rebecca is describing. From a food perspective, the culturally blending that occurred in Appalachia during the early 1900s greatly influenced the recipes and flavors of the food. Jennifer Wilson describes this in terms of her own family.

[Jennifer Wilson] One thing I find very interesting is not much with preserving food, but how food cultures have evolved in Eastern Kentucky because of the influence of so many cultures who came in to work in the mines. For example, my own family, my grandma was Hungarian my grandpa was Ukrainian and we always had what I thought was a traditional Ukrainian Easter with kielbasa and beet relish and all these things. Well I came to find out, those things that we ate, my grandfather's sisters prepared them and they worked in a boarding house that was run by a Jewish family. So those things were actually more, I guess Jewish foods that we had incorporated. It really is interesting how these dishes that some people, well my grandma made this and this is Appalachian and it really isn't. It's from way far away. I think I heard and don't quote this as fact, but I heard this growing up. That the bank in Lynch exchanged the currency from 60 different countries. So I mean it really was a cultural epicenter.

Fermentation was a staple process in Appalachian food preservation, no doubt influenced by the Hungarian families who traveled to the region as Jennifer describes. The idea that Appalachia has a diverse and culturally rich food history goes against what some might assume. The notion of 'hillbilly' cooking, or 'white trash' as some may describe it, is layered with ingredients and techniques passed down from the culturally diverse communities that existed in the Appalachian coal fields.

[Janet] We don't do anything what we don't eat.

Here Janet is returning to the importance of land in Appalachia, and how the land you lived on often determined what you ate and who you ate with.

[Bev May] Folks over the generations pass land down from family to family, so you'll have well like the little creek I live on, Wilson creek, there's families on the holler that have been there for five generations so we've all known each other or went to school together and for five generations easy, maybe more. That's the way we line up in communities, it's like a neighborhood if you live on a holler.

Hollers became organizing networks that gave individuals a built in community through which to define themselves. Often this influenced the amount of social capital women were able to achieve.

[Janet] They may not know you, but if they can place you, and it's not categorizing you it's just putting you where they know. Like you're from so and so creek or you're from this bunch of people, okay then I know who you are. It's okay. That's not a bad thing, it's just how for lack of better word, how people classify each other.

[Bev] It means that people know you even if you don't know them, I mean even if they've not met you they know who you are because they know you're family. That you kind of have a sense of your place in the community, in a positive way, that you belong there, and also that you know your neighbors which is wonderful. So that means that the last little flooding incident we had one of the neighbors who we've had a little bit of a property conflict with stopped and offered to help out my mom to get her car out of the water and out of the flood water before it got any worse. So you may not always agree on everything, you may have some little difficulties amongst yourself, but you're ultimately going to help each other and do right by each other in the end. So that's pretty important. There was an incident about a week ago where someone was seen at 1am in the morning walking up Wilson creek with a backpack towards the head of the holler, it's a 3 mile holler, so it's kinda strange 'why would you be doing that?' and the Facebook turned into a neighborhood watch, where each house he walked by the dogs got upset and people looked out and saw this person they didn't know walking up the holler and they put it on Facebook, so there's this whole chain of minute by minute progres-

sion alerting each other there's somebody who may be a problem that's walking up the holler at 1 in the morning.

Bev is speaking to the resilience felt and practiced by Appalachian communities. Even when things are not going to plan, despite whatever differences may exist, neighbors always come together to help the best they can. This is key to understanding the role of women in Appalachia.

Owning land was a way for Appalachians to maintain autonomy and power against the larger structures that control much of the mountains. In situations like this, having agency over your own life in any capacity is a victory. For Appalachians, that agency was expressed through connection to place and nurturing of community. Many Appalachians left the mountains in the early 1900s when the mines collapsed and finding work became even more challenging. This diaspora had a great effect on land ownership, most of which went into the hands of absentee owners (Portelli, 2012). As families surrendered ownership of their land, they also surrendered the space to maintain the food traditions. Many of the women I spoke with described a missing link in the chain, their grandmothers and mothers practiced canning and preserving, but perhaps they themselves didn't, or their daughters didn't.

In my interview with Janet, she told me a story of her cousin, who left the mountains for work but recently returned to his family land. This story exemplifies the importance of indescribable connection to land and place that exists for Appalachians.

[Janet] If it is land that has been in a family for generations, hundreds of years, yes yes. It's as much as, I have a cousin who came back after forty years and bought up as much of his parents homestead that he could and he said 'when I walk, they walk with me' and I thought that's nice, that is nice. So yeah, it is very reverent, it's very... it's their land, it's their dirt.

Lori and her family have also been called to come back to Kentucky and buy her husbands family land.

[Lori] We've been here only a year in a half, we came here from Indiana. But my husband's family has been here for 195 years. And so we bought the family property, and it was owned by like 9 different family members. And so we've gotten it back into, my husband's Gary Gearheart, so it's back in the Gearheart name. It was in a group of names, you know. So we bought the property, we built a barn, we built a chicken house and we've just sorta been gettin' a huge garden put in. Before we bought it, we'd come and we'd stay with Aunt Sue and she would say "well why don't you just buy the family farm" and Gary would say "well I didn't know it was for sale" and she'd say "well for you it is, but not just for anyone". So we talked to her and Aunt Cat, who are the only two original living relatives. There were six kids total. And all the men, my husband's father had passed away, and then other three boys had passed away. And Aunt Sue and Aunt Cat were still alive and they said "well it's thirty plus acres, thirty three I think it ends up being, is that what you're lookin' for?" and we said "well, yeah that's more than, more than enough to do what we're wanting to do." And I think there's nine acres of bottomland and she said "how bout twenty thousand?" and we said "we'll take it, sold!" So then it took close to a year to get everybody's signatures, there were like 9 heirs to it. So we got everybody's signatures, and we took it up to court house a year, I think it was close to on the dot for a year later, and took a picture and we decided to call it Gearheart Mountain Farm cause it's been in the Gearheart name for 195 years.

Family land transcends time by pulling people back to the mountains even if they have been away for generations. This is key to understanding how Appalachians build community, and how women have taken ownership and control over their role within them. Feminist scholar, Patricia Hill Collins describes the 'new politics of community,'] a way of questioning gender roles and family structures in definition the systems of power in communities, which are assumed to exist on in the private-sphere instead of a social construct (Terman, 2016). It is important to note that all the individuals included in this

research were white, a factor that clearly contributed to their level of privilege. Race is an unspoken factor, throughout these interviews, that affects all the individuals. Many of the struggles and successes that they experienced were attached to the color of their skin.

When using intersectionality in this research, race undoubtedly affects the way these individuals move through the world. Though not a component of the interviews, the privilege of race was an unspoken tenant throughout, clearly different from the risks and resilience's that may be felt by women of color in the rural south. In this way, intersectionality becomes a necessary tool in unpacking the network of interlaced values and beliefs that build community in Appalachia.

Implications and Reflections

This research began as a journey to understand how food knowledge was transmitted by women in Appalachia over the generations. I was fascinated by the way that gender was constructed through this process of transmission and the value that was given to those who became the carriers of that knowledge. Spending time with the individuals in this study and listening to their stories provided a window into the actuality of some ways of living in Appalachia that are connected to food production, albeit there are probably countless others. Tough, resilient, compassionate people who will never give up on a fight for something they believe in. People who have felt the oppressive capitalist structures that exist throughout Appalachia, and beyond, yet have continued to push forward. People who defy every stereotype presented through medias simplistic lens of 'hillbilly rhetoric'. Appalachian scholars Barbara Ellen Smith and Stephen L. Fisher speak to this place-based identity building in saying, "deliberate claiming of identity can be an act of

resistance, a way of fighting back against Appalachian stereotypes, which in turn can undergird organizing against exploitation and discrimination in the region” (Terman, 2016). In order for this identity to be successful, however, it must be used as a bridge for connecting communities and people beyond the assumption that ‘community’ is defined a homogenous group of shared values (Terman, 2016). The idea of resistance as described by Smith and Fisher identifies many of choices and practices carried out by the individuals I spoke with, who would likely not claim resistance as a descriptor of their identity, but who were deeply tied to their communities and place. Fostering and developing an Appalachian identity can be “a powerful strategy for growing sustainable communities through alternative economic systems, cultural traditions, and organizational and coalition strategies; it is also a means of confronting poverty, environmental degradation, health risks, and educational challenges” (Terman, 2016). Food labor and traditional practices falls directly into the definition of Appalachian identity. It carries tradition, connects to place, and gives women a stake in the explanation.

Being Appalachian, specifically being an Appalachian woman is a complicated process of intersecting ideas and values. Prior to this research, I often wondered how accurate my view of Appalachia is. In many ways, my summer trips to the mountains made me a tourist. I was as much of an outsider as the journalists and politicians who are now throwing around the word “rural” like it is the I did not live there, my family was not from there, yet I felt a sense of urgency to be a part of that community. With the election of Donald Trump recent media explanations throw the word “rural” around like it was the plague.

These definitions of Appalachia and the South are easy to digest to an outside audience, giving them something to juxtapose their own struggles against. Life may be bad, but at least they aren't a "hillbilly." They leave no space for the complex, intertwined identities of Appalachians, instead describing them as a monolith, an unchanging force that lacks agency over their own lives. What it ignores, and I will quote this from a recent presentation by Ivy Brashear in response to the book *Hillbilly Elegy*, is the "the systemic capitalist oppression that encourages persistent poverty. It assumes there is some special sect of the working class that is especially dedicated to white people. It is rife with fragile masculinity that actively diminishes the critical role that Appalachian women play in the culture, the resistance, in the workforce, and in the new economy" (Brashear, ASA 2017). Though Ivy is speaking here about the words of J.D. Vance, she is also speaking to the larger silencing that has occurred throughout Appalachia of both the people and the movements within.

Throughout history, Appalachia has suffered from extractions culturally, economically, and environmentally. Coal and timber industries are at the heart of the economy of Appalachia, even today when both industries have undergone massive cuts and mechanization, leaving their employees out of work and out of money. Appalachia in the twenty first century is undergoing many rapid changes. Contemporary perspectives are turning towards avenues of redevelopment, focusing on food production, economic revitalization, and social change. However, outside of these movements we still see Appalachia represented in much of the same way that it always has been. Hillbilly iconography has remained present throughout this cultural shift, seen most prominently in regional tourism. The war between rural and urban has cycled back through and we are once again faced

with misrepresentations. The tension, however, is now primarily because the industry of tourism is dependent on the creation of positive experiences (Schumann & Fletcher, 2017). Tourists are less likely to go to a place because of its social inequality, racial prejudice, or concentrated poverty. However, these misrepresentations of Appalachia have been key to the strategy of economic activities such as environmental extractions. The War on Poverty has continued to hang over Appalachia even nearly fifty years later.

The culture of misrepresentation and oversimplification of Appalachia has roots in the early media attention that occurred around the Beverly Hillbillies and other local color writer's dramatic interpretations of poverty and education in the mountains. The intention with these early local color writers, or the American literary regionalism that followed, was to depict a place by the characters, dialect, customs, and other features that are uniquely specific to that area (Campbell). The culture that existed in the mountains prior to the 1900s was understandably rural and isolated. The mountains surrounding Appalachia create a physical barrier to the outside world. Roads did not offer an easy path out, often requiring a multiple day journey over steep and dangerous terrain. This offered ample opportunity for the writers to exaggerate the divide both culturally and physically. From the ignorant moonshiner seen in early 1900s, to the savage mountaineer of the 1920s and into the 1930s, and into the comically backward yokel that we see in the 1950s into the 1970s. These images played into the emotions and fears of the urban middle-class. The security of separation that many of the powerful outsiders crafting the hillbilly narrative was challenged with the Southern diaspora of the 1950s (Harkins, 2004). As coal mines became mechanized and natural gas became more popular, many rural Southerners were forced out of Appalachia and into large urban cities like Cincinnati, Chicago,

and Detroit. Suddenly the “hillbillies” that were safely trapped within television sets, were sharing city streets. This diaspora is the largest documented population movement in American history, creating an “invisible minority” defined by sociologists as “Urban Appalachians”, descendants of those who left the Appalachian mountain region with the economic downturn. The introduction of these individuals and communities brought forth many national anxieties over class and capital, demanding urban dwellers to face the reality of the many representations they had grown accustomed to.

The “hillbilly invasion” described during the 1950s was surrounded by rhetoric that played into the fearful images of rural poverty, and challenged the definition of the American Dream. I have seen this same rhetoric cycle back in the public opinion of Appalachia. Media outlets use click-bate headlines like “No Sympathy for the Hillbilly” (Rich, 2017) to satisfy the public appetite for simplicity. Once again, the word “hillbilly” has become synonymous for “a small army of white protestant, Early American migrants from the South— who are usually poor, primitive, and fast with a knife” (Votaw, 1958), as originally described by Alberta Votaw in a Harper’s in 1958. What these outcries are saying is that there was a real fear of becoming “one of them” because what hillbillies represented did align with the current central values of American culture, such as hard work, education, and outward perceptions of beauty and cleanliness. This same fear has cycled back around, now used to place rural Americans in a political box. However, I think that in this time of turbulence and uncertainty, we should not be using Appalachia or rural America as a scapegoat for issues that are happening in urban and suburban areas as well. The emotional balm that characterized the media influence really requires a critical analysis of the root of the problem.

This research is a response to these misrepresentations, a call to action for scholars and academics to think critically about how the definitions of Appalachia affect not only the opinions of those on the outside, but also the way that residents view themselves. Throughout my research, I was surprised not only by the kindness and warmth of my interviewees, but also at their questioning of the importance of the story they had to tell. To understand Appalachia, as I feel we so desperately need to, we must make space for Appalachians to tell their own story. The dangers of generalizations and the gravitations towards soft spoken simplifications has brought us to this place of conflict and confusion. The nation is eager to consume a particular hillbilly story, one that satisfies their insecurities and gives them a place to blame. But, Appalachia is not a monolith. This research starts at the bottom, in the most underrepresented and arguably undervalued part of Appalachian culture, women and food labor. The conversations had about food preservation, gardening, and cooking in Appalachia led to deeper themes of self-sufficiency, power, community, the value of place and land, and the many ways resistance can take form.

Ronni Lundy, author and Appalachian food scholar has worked for decades to tell the true stories of Appalachian food and culture. Her most recent book, *Victuals*, is a celebration of regionality and the techniques used by Appalachians to present a sense of seasonality and frugality that are counter to the capitalist mode of consumption that we see in other areas of the food system. Lundy believes that there is still work to be done to accurately describe Appalachian foodways. In an interview with *Saveur*, Lundy states,

“In the broadest sense, people not from around here think of the food, the people, the culture as crude or primitive. Sometimes that’s presented as romantic, more often it’s derogatory. I believe a careful look at the foodways presents a very different picture. For example, I mentioned a deep wisdom about the earth, and all you need to do is begin listing the number of wild plants that are used for culinary or medicinal purposes and you see that we are very smart people. The cleverness, skill, and sheer hard work required to

cure meat, to ferment corn and beans, to make use of every possible edible you can find is another indication of the intelligence and industry that has characterized the region from the start” (Hoffman, 2016).

Ronni is speaking to the past and the present of Appalachia and how a deep connection to land and place and instrumental when describing the foodways of the mountains. This is something that the research has opened for me, the idea of the future of Appalachia and how food fits into that.

In 2016, President Obama introduced the POWER+ Plan as an option for the “just transition” away from coal. Through this plan, over \$1 billion dollars will be provided to coal states and tribal lands to clean up and restore abandoned mines, and provide funding to put local people to work in alternative fields such as broadband internet. This plan is just one of the many presented as a change for the future of Appalachia. Although the current administration has very different ideas about how industry, jobs, and culture should be cultivated in the region, it seems even more important to incorporate and support the kind of resilient labor that has been gendered and absent from the economic calculations of the value of the region and its people. In planning forward, the transition to a modern mode of survival and thriving must account for the caring labor of women and the domestic sphere in some way. In particular, as Appalachian food becomes commodified in restaurants, cookbooks, and urban spaces, it would be interesting to think about how to value and benefit the practitioners who have developed and maintained these practices.

Appalachian studies has long sought to understand how place influences people and societies, yet has only recently begun to include feminism into that conversation (Engelhardt, 2005). The connection between feminism and Appalachian studies is crucial

and urgent in order to define a just transition of the Appalachian economy. I have used feminist perspectives to analyze the experiences of people in this region but I have been careful not to impose the concept of feminism on their beliefs and words unless they suggested it. From an academic perspective, the possibilities for each field to inform the other is exciting and presents potential for unpacking the long-reinforced stereotypes and power structures. Feminism in Appalachia could reveal the connections between individuals and institutions, the personal and the political, and the past and present (Engelhard, Hill and Hollow). Examining the relationship between women and food offer opportunities to understand the ways that women have resisted or rebelled against the larger ideas of what they can do and who they can be (Avakian, 2005). Allowing the discussion of food in Appalachia to come from the historic carriers of knowledge, predominately women and marginalized groups, will strengthen the cultural understanding of historic food practices.

This research does not provide comprehensive answers to these problems, but contributes to the ongoing narrative of diversity in experiences in Appalachia. As scholars and activists, we must continue to uplift the voices of Appalachians who are fighting against the structures of power that continue to white-wash them. Women are one chapter in the larger story of Appalachia, yet they hold the tools and traditions that have been crucial to its resilience and fight. Women hold the key to the past; therefore, they must be included in the future.

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