



The Livelihood of Kin: Making Ends Meet "The Kentucky Way"

Rhoda H. Halperin

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Rural Appalachians in Kentucky call it "The Kentucky Way"—making a living by doing many kinds of paid and unpaid work and sharing their resources within extended family networks. In fact, these strategies are practiced by rural people in many parts of the world, but they have not been studied extensively in the United States. In *The Livelihood of Kin*, Rhoda Halperin undertakes a detailed exploration of this complex, family-oriented economy, showing how it promotes economic well-being and a sense of identity for the people who follow it.

Using actual life and work histories, Halperin shows how people make a living "in between" the cash economy of the city and the agricultural subsistence economy of the country. In regionally based, three-generation kin networks, family members work individually and jointly at many tasks: small-scale agricultural production, food processing and storage, odd jobs, selling used and new goods in marketplaces, and wage labor, much of which is temporary. People can make ends meet even in the face of job layoffs and declining crop subsidies. With these strategies people win a considerable degree of autonomy and control over their lives.

Halperin also examines how such multiple livelihood strategies define individual identity by emphasizing a person's role in the family network over an occupation. She reveals, through psychiatric case histories, what damage can result when individuals leave the family network for wage employment in the cities, as increasing urbanization has forced many people to do.

While certainly of interest to scholars of Appalachian studies, this lively and readable study will also be important for economic anthropologists and urban and rural sociologists.

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