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deviant regional
culture or is it a
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The Appalachian Mountains can be seen to be a barrier and divide between developed and rural America. The people who live in the region are certainly steeped in past rural traditions and are stuck in their lot with not much hope for improvement. Since the settlements and towns here are cut off from the regional towns and cities in West Virginia such as Wheeling and Charleston, they are also in a sense detached from reality. In the short documentary, *The Hollow* we can observe this sense of detachment and as such the society here is deviant from the norms which we expect from a normal American family.

What norms are violated in *American Hollow*?

American Hollow is a documentary which describes the situation of life in the Appalachian mountains where some family norms are clearly shockingly violated. You could say that the norms are clearly violated when children marry at the age of 12 and there is substantial domestic violence in houses. The normal situation is relying on the handouts provided by the government. When viewing the documentary when observes that being deviant is actually a way of life here and the family which is put under the spotlight has lived in this situation for no less than seven generations. The family norms which we all take for granted in a civilized society are here thrown to the dogs and some scenes provide for pretty strong and shocking viewing.

With the Appalachians being basically a society that is dominated by males, the patriarchal element can easily be observed. This can be seen when Iree's husband declares that laundry is a woman's job. He is perhaps less direct and more avoiding of the fact that there is substantial domestic violence in the Hollow and this is the main departure from the norm here. Iree's mother

appears to have been consistently beaten with a stick that gained its own notoriety through having its own name. This terrible beating and violence appears to have been taken as the norm in places such as Cabell County where statistics reveal that no less than 75 per cent of women were beaten while around 60 per cent reported physical abuse. This is a clear vindication that domestic violence is the norm in Appalachian society and as a woman all you can expect is a severe beating before you can say heads or tails. Clint married young in the film and wanted to leave his society immediately. However this was not the case since he came back with his tail between his legs. This reveals that the norm of being close to family and going to jail was pretty much normal for people here. They say that 'there is no shame going to jail, just staying in there'. This is obviously completely at odds with what people consider as the norm.

Violence against women which is frowned upon in modern society is clearly very much the norm here however spitting in the face is considered to be a sign of disrespect, and is focused on more than the beatings - should the family intervene in a physically abusive relationship? This is just one of the questions that do not seem to be asked in the Hollow.

Then there is also the issue of Government help where the family doesn't see anything wrong with receiving state aid as primary income, outside the family it might be frowned upon although again this is very unclear. Other characteristics include jobs such as the gathering of ginseng and moss for cash while the bathtub is just that - a tub in the kitchen. The concept of a shower in the bathroom simply does not exist. Clint also has a punching shed where he can dish out the blows to his wife.

What norms are accepted or assumed?

Self-sufficiency is regarded as being the norm - " you gotta work, you gotta take care of yourself" (is it limited to them growing some of their own food?)

(In the Hollow): Dependency on welfare and only working odd jobs/heavily relying on welfare which form an interesting balance but which also shows that the families do not want to get out of the hole that they have stuck themselves in.

Other norms that are accepted include violence and starting work as soon as you finish High School and Vocational School. Take care of mentally ill is also accepted as the norm with regular visits, but Marion (the mentally handicapped sister) lives alone which is opposed to the philosophy of the Appalachians.

There is also a strong sense of depression in the community with many relying quite heavily on medicine such as Prozac. There is a lack of therapy or counseling here too. Another norm which is seen to be accepted is the fact that the Prozac arrives by mail with very little checking done at a pharmacy or medical clearance being gotten. Family care as opposed to professional care - family has a norm of personally caring for one another Iree talking about her sister/sister living on her own despite being retarded - retardation might be brain damage due to being hit in the head - this is also a norm accepted at The Hollow. Education - to society, education is valuable; to them, schooling is worthless

Receiving Prozac by mail - the meaning of it (one of the men sets his calendar by when he receives/runs out of Prozac) - there's also little hope after receiving Prozac. " Cooking is woman's work" (if this is indeed the case,

why are many chefs in restaurants men?). This contrast is also prevalent in The Hollow where there does not seem to be much equality on these fronts Does the government owe these people anything beyond what is given? Should there be paved roads, closer/better schools? If the government cared more, would they care more or would they resent the government? Possible consequence of better care: fewer people wanting to leave/leaving and coming back. These are just some of the questions which have to be asked on this score

Is this a matriarchal or a patriarchal family? I would say that it is pretty much mixed - both Iree and Bass do agricultural work together; Clint is helped by his mom (matriarchal), " if mom wasn't here, we'd be dead" (matriarchal), culture of violence against women. Going to jail doesn't affect them either - if you're not applying for " normal" jobs, then your arrest record doesn't hurt you.

Who is deviant?

You could say that all of the characters in the film are deviant. Clint is clearly deviant since he wants to leave the family home and get married as soon as possible. Other deviant characteristics include his relationship with Shirley which is consistently frowned upon while he also has a very fraught relationship with his parents. His constant cursing and swearing in the film means that he is burning up inside with pent up fury.

Jody (Samantha's husband) is another deviant character who is charged with murder; destroying the house; leaving the Hollow for Georgia; tried running over Samantha with the kids in the truck; ripped the Bible; Talking about

Jody murdering Samantha as being normal, but the spit in the face is over the line, " I told you so"

Edgar: Wanting to go back to jail/keeping running tally of times in jail/being proud of going to jail

Shirley - on again/off again fiancée, broke off engagement " because I was thinking stupid" (usually you'd have better justifications/wouldn't go back and forth) - or is this normal? One can also ask the question: is Iree deviant for letting her mentally handicapped sister live alone when there is a norm of kinship/taking care of family? Finally Clint wants to move out, " A bad check always returns"

Is the government deviant for only providing Prozac by mail and welfare checks? Should the government provide more/have better infrastructure (roads, closer schools, running water, etc)? The lack of investment in the area makes the house practically worthless (we see this when they try to put the house up for bond); cops don't come out " Because it's too far". These are just some of the questions that should be taken into consideration when discussing the film. Government infrastructure is pretty limited and intervention is even less.

What forms of social control were used to prevent or stop deviance?

One of the main forms of social control in the Appalachian society is the Church which keeps the people in total and complete ignorance. You will also go to jail if you break and enter another house although the policemen are nowhere to be found. The Church's influence is clearly evident in the scene

when Edgar comes back from jail and Irene wants him to go back to Church. The police are however nowhere to be found when there is social violence in the home. The government also acts as a control agent since there is very little that people can do if they are not provided with even the most basic hygiene facilities such as running water for example. As soon as they leave the Appalachians however, the male members of society are made to conform which as when Jody is arrested by the Georgia police. The courts grant divorce quite easily to so in a sense they are a form of social control too.

Who acts as a control agent?

The family is an important control agent in the Hollow since for example; Clint's mother did not want to give him enough money to get married so that was controlling him. The neighbor was also another important control agent since he alerted the police when Edgar was breaking into another house. So the control agents can be split up between the ones on the inside such as Clint's family for resisting his moving out with Iree' and Bass determined on this issue and those on the outside such as the government and the police where the police arrested Edgar for breaking and entering, the law courts granting a divorce and eventually releasing Edgar on bail due to the fact that his house was not worth enough to be counted as a bond. There is also the naming and shaming over food and the family while the police are very selective in enforcing the laws.

The government remains the principal control agent in the Appalachians since it controls the amount of welfare and subsidies handed out. It actually

gives just enough for the people to survive in their current condition and definitely does not go out of its way to improve their lot. This means that the Appalachian families have practically grown completely dependent on the government for survival and they have to persist in this way of life without much hope. This creates a situation of depression and instability with those who are desperate turning to a life of crime which is eventually controlled by other social norms such as arrest and jail. The people have no hope in changing their lives since this is not possible in their current situation and they descend even further into a culture of vice and vicissitude. Education which is sorely lacking is the key to their improvement but there does not seem to be any hope of getting much of that either.

The other control agent on the inside is the family since this keeps people from leaving the Hollow. When Clint attempted to leave, they hammered it into his head that ' a bad check always returns' not giving him much space with to maneuverer and psychologically already drilling it into his brain that he was coming back to his life of degradation and unhappiness.

In this manner the family is being a control agent but it also being deviant. The norm for those families who are in a bad way would be that their children would be allowed to leave their environment to make a better life for themselves but this is clearly not the case at The Hollow. Here no one leaves forever and they all come back with their tail between their legs in a sort of inevitable stupor. For the people in the Hollow there is no other way of life and this means tha they have to stay put since they have no future anywhere and in anything. There is nothing better than hopelessness as a control agent.

However on the contrary, the family does not attempt to halt deviance which normal people find abhorrent. The fact that one marries when just twelve years old, smokes at such an early age, is exposed to rampant domestic violence and remains on welfare is not seen as something bad. This is the lot for the families at the Hollow and since the children are taught these deviant norms by their parents, there is really no hope for them. Additionally the fierce rural independence of early American society is consistently being eroded as more and more of these families become dependent on the cycle of government aid and sink deeper into the mire.

Food consumption is also an issue since the diet is very much full of fat and without many nutrients. Excessive smoking, drinking and drug consumption also play a heavy havoc with the people's health which is very much on the down. Families believe that they are doing the right thing however and this also means that they are acting as control agents for themselves.

Although the control agents are important factors in preventing the people at the Hollow from moving on with their lives, the main control agent is fear of failure itself. There is a substantial contrast with children who are brought up in wealthy areas and who have everything in life when compared to the children in the Hollow. Still the latter spend a lot of money on vices which continue to draw them down into the mud and this keeps them from improving their livelihood. It is only with a full scale effort of job creation, education and most of all health observance that these families can start making something out of their lives.