

**Tazewell County's Mining Industry and its relationship to the Religious,
Educational and Political Culture.**

Amanda Lea Lester

Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in
Political Science

Dr. Richard C. Rich, Chair
Dr. Anita M. Puckett
Dr. Burton M. Atkins

April 18, 2008
Blacksburg, Virginia

Key terms: Mining, Industry, Political Socialization, Religion, Education

Tazewell County's Mining Industry and its relationship to the Religious, Educational and Political Culture.

Amanda Lea Lester

(ABSTRACT)

There is significant historical research on coal, education, religion, churches, and cultural values of the Tazewell County. However, there is no research weaving all of these elements together to tell a story of the county and its political development. This research project is a qualitative study in which I wish to reveal the story of the culture, specifically the political culture, of Tazewell County.

I would like to examine objectively whether or not the mining industry has had an effect on the cultural aspects of the county. I want to ask: **Is there evidence that the coal industry has shaped the political culture of Tazewell County and, if so, through what mechanisms did it exert this influence?**

Research will include the examination of mechanisms by which a political culture is created in single-dominant industry communities, such as Tazewell County Virginia. Research will include elements of political socialization such as peer groups, coal camps, church groups, family and community. The research will specifically focus on religion and education and how they have or have not defined the political culture of the area.

“Tazewell County’s Mining Industry and it’s relationship to the Religious, Educational and Political Culture.”

Table of Contents

Introduction to the Study.....	1
Literature Review.....	7
Background Information.....	14
Jewell Ridge Background Information.....	21
Pocahontas Background Information.....	23
Bishop Background Information.....	25
Religious Culture.....	25
Educational Culture.....	27
Political Culture.....	30
Methods.....	34
Questionnaire Guidelines.....	35
Interview.....	35
Results.....	37
Historical Findings.....	37
Results from Interviews.....	39
Results Regarding Religion and Education.....	41
Results Regarding Politics.....	46
General Research Results.....	49
Coal Camps as a Mechanism of Political Socialization.....	53
The Mining Industry, in general, as a mechanism of Political Socialization.....	56
Conclusion.....	57
Appendices	
1. Biographical Information regarding Participants.....	61
2. General Tazewell County Information.....	65
3. Coal Camp Images and Map.....	66
Works Cited Page.....	70