



# **Mountaintop Mining in Appalachia: Understanding Stakeholders and Change in Environmental Conflict (Stud in Conflict, Justice, & Soc Change)**

*Susan F. Hirsch, E. Franklin Dukes*

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**“Due to the authors framing the discussion using conflict analysis and resolution, Mountaintop Mining in Appalachia could serve as a case study in how to engage populations with divergent views. This makes the book generalizable to other conflicts outside of the controversy surrounding surface mining. Mountaintop Mining in Appalachia would be a great resource to both academic and public libraries not only within the Appalachian region but beyond.” —Tennessee Libraries**

Residents of the Appalachian coalfields share a history and heritage, deep connections to the land, and pride in their own resilience. These same residents are also profoundly divided over the practice of mountaintop mining—that is, the removal and disposal in nearby valleys of soil and rock in order to reach underlying coal seams. Companies and some miners claim that the practice has reduced energy prices, earned income for shareholders, and provided needed jobs. Opponents of mountaintop mining argue that it poisons Appalachia’s waters and devastates entire communities for the sake of short-term gains.

This conflict is emblematic of many other environmental disputes in the United States and around the world, disputes whose intensity derives not only from economic and environmental stakes but also from competing claims to individual and community identity. Looking beyond the slogans and seemingly irreconcilable differences, however, can reveal deeper causes of conflict, such as flawed institutions, politics, and inequality or the strongly held values of parties for whom compromise is difficult to achieve.

*Mountaintop Mining in Appalachia* focuses on the people of the region, the people who have the most at stake and have been the most active in trying to shift views and practices. By examining the experiences of these stakeholders and their efforts to effect change, Susan F. Hirsch and E. Franklin Dukes introduce key concepts and theories from the field of conflict analysis and resolution. They provide a compelling case study of how stakeholders challenge governance-as-usual, while offering insight into the causes of conflict over other environmental issues.

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