Exploring Gender and Economic Development in Appalachia

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By Melissa Latimer and Ann M. Oberhauser

Gender relations have influenced the distribution, causes, and consequences of social and economic inequality in the Appalachian region. Labor market studies that examine gender-based sources of inequality greatly expanded our understanding of poverty in Appalachia for both women and men (Billings and Tickamyer 1993). Researchers, who incorporate gender into their analyses, consistently have documented that women are more vulnerable to poverty than men in this region (Latimer 2000; Tickamyer and Tickamyer 1991). The increased attention to gender issues within Appalachian studies reflected the heightened awareness of how gender—in addition to race, class, and ethnicity—shape economic development of this region. For example, recent Appalachian scholarship examined women’s contributions to early industrialization (Anglin 1993; Billings and Blee 2000), the intersection of race, gender, and class in this region’s political economy (Smith 1999a), gendered dimensions of poverty (Cuoto 1994; Latimer 2000; Rogers, Mencken, and Mencken 1997; Tickamyer and Tickamyer 1991), as well as women’s roles in union organizing and community development (Maggard 1990; Stack 1999). Gender inequalities also were manifest spatially within this region (Oberhauser and Turnage 1999; Gorham 1992), particularly as they relate to income disparities between men and women (Latimer 2000; Tickamyer and Tickamyer 1991). Overall, the Appalachian region has been defined by uneven development of its human capital and economic resources, with some areas experiencing high growth and low unemployment, while other regions are facing chronic economic problems (Hammer 2000; Obermiller and Maloney 2002; Mencken 1997; Wood and Bischak 2000).

This article highlights how dynamic gender relations affect the diverse experiences of men and women in Appalachia’s economic development. The analysis draws from the 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census data to examine and compare the demographic, social, and economic conditions of women and men in Appalachia. The discussion focuses on geographical comparisons among Appalachia’s three subregions (Northern,
Central, and Southern), as delineated by the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), as well as among rural, urban, and metro counties in both Appalachia and the non-Appalachian United States. Economic growth in the past decade is highest in urban areas, especially in parts of Southern Appalachia. Trends in the Appalachian region also are compared to those in the non-Appalachian portion of the United States.

The analysis is grounded in a feminist approach to gender inequality and addresses the various structural forces that have posed barriers to women’s advancement in the economic arena. This place-specific approach to social and economic differentiation focuses on the connection between unpaid domestic labor, education and training, labor market segregation, income disparities, and state policies toward work and welfare (Tickamyer et al. 1993). The discussion outlines how gender roles—particularly the status of women in Appalachia—are being transformed in the context of economic restructuring, shifting educational experiences, changing marriage and family status, and rural/urban dynamics. The analysis responds to questions concerning how women’s entry into the workforce affects their economic status, if at all. For example, do increased rates of education among women translate to higher paying jobs and more diverse occupations? And, how does women’s economic status vary within Appalachia?

As cultural analyses of regional development demonstrate, the images and experiences of people are distinctly gendered (Fiene 2002; Billings, Norman, and Ledford 1999). Consider, for example, the stereotypes of Daisy Mae, the rugged coal miner, and the plantation slave woman. All of these characters have certain gender images that continue to play out in the contemporary media, policy debates, and popular perspectives on the region (Williamson 1995). Recent literature challenges these gendered stereotypes of women in Appalachia which are constructed according to certain biases concerning class, race, and ethnicity (Smith 1999b). Contemporary research on African-American and Native-American women in the South, for example, challenges the representation of people of color as homogenous (Wilson and Beaver 1999). Also of note is work by Billings, Norman, and Ledford (1999), which reveals the fictional basis for derogatory images of Appalachian women and “backward” mountain people in popular media and academic sources.

This article further deconstructs these stereotypes and uncovers the real and continuing consequences of gender inequality in the region’s labor market. It is argued that the impact of economic restructuring on labor markets has diverse outcomes on both men and women. But as women’s economic activity rates grow—social and economic disparities continue. The following four sections of this article examine the spatial
and socio-economic dimensions of gender and work in Appalachia. Following this introduction, the article explores some of the geographical aspects of gender relations and the effects of economic restructuring in Appalachia. Specifically, analyses of employment and poverty reveal the marginalization of people in rural areas, as compared to people in urban areas. This discussion also addresses gendered dimensions of economic restructuring, particularly in the context of declining employment in the region's extractive industry.

The social dimensions of women's economic status are outlined in the next section through a discussion of educational attainment and family and marital status. The following section analyzes economic aspects of gender differences in the labor market—specifically, labor force participation, employment in diverse economic sectors, and income. Public policies that affect women's economic status through access to higher education, childcare, and other social services are examined in the final section. The conclusion summarizes these spatial and socio-economic themes and offers recommendations for achieving gender equity by improving the status of women in Appalachia.

**Geography, Gender, and Economic Restructuring in Appalachia**

The diverse geographical context of Appalachia is evident in the variety of economic activities, migration patterns, and demographic character of this region's population (Couto 2002; Pollard 2003). A number of researchers have documented tremendous variation within and between the Southern, Central, and Northern parts of this region, characterizing the subregional differences according to variations in the labor force, transportation and other infrastructure, and types of economic activity across the region (Billings and Tickamyer 1993; Cuoto 1994; Isserman 1996; Mencken 1997; Pollard 2003). This discussion explores the role of geography as well as economic restructuring in this region's uneven development and gender inequality.

Rural/urban differences are considered by many to be the greatest contributing factor to development and underdevelopment within the region. As Billings and Tickamyer (1993, 9) argue, "many Appalachian development issues are rural problems although the region contains or is contiguous to a number of major metropolitan areas." Furthermore, a comparison of 1980 metropolitan and nonmetropolitan poverty rates within five key Appalachian states finds that poverty rates in the nonmetropolitan counties are between 2.7 and 7.5 percent higher than in the metropolitan counties (Billings and Tickamyer 1993). In the 1980s, industrial restructuring contributed to further economic marginalization in the
rural regions of Appalachia, as compared to urban areas (Couto 1994; Isserman 1995).

Consistent with trends in the United States as a whole, the Appalachian population becomes less rural between 1990 and 2000. Variations within this region, however, remain high. In 1990, 46.4 percent of Appalachian counties are categorized as rural, as compared to 49.3 percent of the non-Appalachian U.S. counties (Table 1). The percent of rural counties within the region range from a low of 34.5 percent in Northern Appalachia to a high of 77.0 percent in the Central region. By 2000, both areas become less rural with 34.1 percent of Appalachian counties classified as rural, as compared to 36.2 percent of the non-Appalachian United States (excluding Appalachian counties). Considerable variation in the degree of rurality within Appalachia is also evident in Table 1. Over 65 percent of Central Appalachia is designated as rural, as compared to only 20.8 percent of the Northern counties. Southern Appalachia has the highest percent of metropolitan counties (43.0%) and the Northern subregion has the highest percent of urban counties (42.4%) (U.S. Department of Commerce 2000).

Table 1: Metro, Urban and Rural Counties in Appalachia and the Non-Appalachian United States, 1990 and 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1990 Census</th>
<th>2000 Census</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Metro</td>
<td>Urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Appalachian U.S.</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>29.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appalachia</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>28.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Subregion</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>35.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Subregion</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Subregion</td>
<td>29.9</td>
<td>29.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce 2000
As a whole, rural people fare worse than individuals living in an urban setting, in terms of occupational segregation, poverty, and overall economic hardship (Albrecht, Albrecht, and Albrecht 2000; Duncan 1992; Tickamyer and Latimer 1993). Women and people of color are at greater disadvantage in rural labor markets (Tickamyer et al. 1993). Rural areas have low-population density, lack economic diversity, and often do not have a well-developed public sector. These factors contribute to fewer job opportunities in rural areas and lower the institutional and financial base for public programs (Tickamyer and Duncan 1990).

Poverty rates are consistently higher in the non-metropolitan areas of Appalachia, specifically in Central Appalachia (ARC 2003). This subregion reports the highest overall poverty rate at 22.1 percent, as compared to the Northern and Southern regions’ rate of 12.8 percent. Historically, Appalachia experiences a higher rate of poverty than the United States as a whole; however, this gap shrinks considerably between 1990 and 2000. The percentage of all Appalachian families living in poverty in 1999 is 13.6 percent, down from 15.4 percent in 1989. Comparable rates for the nation are 12.9 percent in 1989 and 12.3 percent in 1999.

Poverty and economic marginalization in rural areas are exacerbated by a lack of public transportation, childcare, and other public and private services instrumental in developing labor-market potential (Findeis et al. 2001; Mink 1999; Oberhauser, Weiss, and Waugh 1996). The remote and isolated nature of rural areas puts people—particularly women—at a disadvantage in terms of economic opportunities and gender divisions of labor, confining them to the domestic sphere. Because women and other disempowered groups often lack access to resources and employment opportunities, they are disproportionately represented in peripheral labor markets with their low pay and vulnerability to job loss. The impact of these geographical differences varies among subregions and between rural and urban areas, but is critical in analyzing Appalachian economic development.

Economic restructuring further influences these and other aspects of work and gender. The decline in primary- and secondary-sector jobs and the considerable growth in tertiary jobs affect job opportunities, training, and income in Appalachia and the United States as a whole. Between 1940 and 1990, the proportion of farm people declines from 25 percent to less than 2 percent of the American population (Albrecht, Albrecht, and Albrecht 2000). For many communities, a decrease in the agricultural sector is supplemented by increases in manufacturing and service-sector jobs as well as alternative strategies such as home-based work in both services and industrial production (Gringeri 1994). Studies show these farm-based economies offer part-time and seasonal jobs—further limiting
the labor force participation of women and expanding their workload to include childcare, housework, and farm labor (Nelson and Smith 1999; Tickamyer and Duncan 1990). Geographic mobility is also restricted in these areas because some people do not have the means or the opportunity to commute to better jobs.

Women and people of color are particularly disadvantaged in areas dominated by the primary sector—especially resource-extractive industries. These industries usually are highly volatile and capital intensive, with managerial positions dominated by white males. In addition, firms in these industries typically do not invest in human capital or in the local communities (Humphrey et al. 1993). Since many jobs in these industries have low-education prerequisites for employment, a greater high school dropout rate appears in natural resource-dependent counties (Isserman 1995). Consequently, workers do not have the opportunity to expand their human capital on the job or to develop skills which are useful in a postindustrial economy (Latimer and Mencken 2003).

Although all extractive industries have faced severe economic problems over the last few decades, the effects of economic restructuring was most severe for the coal-mining industry, particularly men. In the rural areas of Northern and Central Appalachia, where nearly 75 percent of all coal miners historically have been employed, the contraction of jobs in coal mining led to record levels of unemployment, poverty, and significantly lower incomes in the 1980s (Latimer and Mencken 2003; Wood and Bischak 2000).

Finally, with the shift from goods to service production in the national economy, a large proportion of more stable, blue-collar jobs have been eliminated. Most of the service-sector growth in rural areas has been in the female-dominated, low-wage, and part-time service sector (Gorham 1992). Employment opportunities for higher paying jobs were particularly difficult to find in rural areas where workers were generally less educated (Glasmeier and Howland 1995; Deavers and Hoppe 1992).

In sum, economic restructuring in Appalachia is both spatially and socially differentiated. Uneven development within this region contributes to marginalization of people in rural locations as a result of reduced access to viable employment and lower-economic status in general. In addition, the shift from a resource-extractive and manufacturing-based economy to service-based activities translates to considerable gender differences in employment opportunities and, consequently, influences the socioeconomic status of women in the region. As more women enter the labor force, however, they are disproportionately employed in low-status, service-sector jobs. The social implications of this dynamic economic landscape are explored next.
Impact of Education and Family Status on Women’s Employment in Appalachia

Women’s vulnerability to poverty and lack of economic empowerment is related to a number of issues which affect gender differences in the labor market (Tickamyer et al. 1993). While education is a significant factor in determining access to employment, the increase in high school and college rates since 1990 do not necessarily translate to improved economic status for women. A related issue concerning gender differences in the labor market is changing family and marital status among households in Appalachia. Specifically, the decline in traditional families with two parents and the rise in female-headed households significantly affect activity rates and the overall economic status of women in this region. This section focuses on the importance of education and training, as well as family and marital status on men and women’s positions in the labor market.

Education is an important indicator of status within the labor market. The average number of years of schooling completed by individuals has been used to measure the effect of human capital on economic inequality. Researchers find increases in average educational levels significantly diminish the probability of being poor or experiencing underemployment or economic hardship. Additionally, educational attainment decreases gender differences in occupational achievement by improving both women and men’s labor-force participation rates (Lichter 1989; Tickamyer and Latimer 1993).

Despite the overall improvement in education—nationally and in Appalachia—counties in the region continue to have lower educational attainment rates than the nation as a whole. In 1990, approximately 76 percent of individuals (twenty-five years or older), who lived outside Appalachia, had at least a high school degree, as compared to 68 percent in Appalachia. By 2000, this rate increased to almost 81 percent and 77 percent, respectively. The percent of U.S. individuals with a college degree is 21.9 percent in 1990 and 24.4 percent in 2000, as compared to 14.3 percent and 17.7 percent in Appalachia, respectively (ARC 2003).

In the past decade, gender differences in educational attainment diminishes as women exceed men in high school graduation rates and expand their access to college. Eighty percent of men and 81 percent of women (25 years or older) outside of Appalachia attain at least a high school degree in 2000. In comparison, the percentage of female high school graduates in Appalachia is 77.3 percent, as compared to the male rate of 76.2 percent in 2000.

The Northern subregion has the largest percent of male and female
high school graduates and the Central subregion has the lowest percent (U.S. Department of Commerce 2000).

In contrast, men often have more education at the college level than women in the region and outside it. For example, 26.8 percent of men outside of Appalachia have at least a college degree, as compared to 23.4 percent of women who graduate from college. Appalachia lags behind the rest of the country in terms of college education among men and women. Almost 19 percent of Appalachian males have a bachelor’s degree, as compared to 16.7 percent of females in 2000. This pattern is consistent throughout the subregions with the exception of Central Appalachia. The Southern subregion has the highest percentages of males and females with a college degree (20.6% males; 18% females), followed by the Northern subregion (18.9% males; 16.6% females). Central Appalachia has the lowest college attainment rates with only 10.5 percent of males and 10.8 percent of females holding a college degree (U.S. Department of Commerce 2000). One cannot underestimate the importance of education in providing the qualifications for secure and well-paid employment. While gender differences decline in this area, men still attain higher levels of education overall than women.

Marriage and family status also greatly affect the duration and daily work schedule of individuals in the labor force. Traditional expectations about gender roles tend to lower women’s labor-force participation rates as well as prevent women from entering into better paying occupations and limit their advancement within what are considered “men’s jobs.” For example, Tallichet (2000) states that traditional, gender-role stereotyping limits the advancement of female underground coal miners. These restrictive expectations have both short- and long-term consequences for Appalachian women and their families because “the more limited the opportunities for employment and income generating activities, the harder hit will be those groups in the population who are least economically independent” (Tickamyer and Tickamyer 1991, 314). This is particularly true in the contemporary economy where families must increasingly maintain two wage earners to survive.

Overall, marriage has a positive effect on employment for men, but a negative one for women. Married women are less likely to work than single women, partly because they are held responsible for domestic labor and childcare—whether or not they have partners (Latimer 2000, 2004; Hurst 2004). Consequently, they face the choice of working fewer hours and having less income or juggling home and work responsibilities with greater stress. According to Tickamyer and Tickamyer (1991, 314), the Appalachian region contains “a larger proportion of women who are not in the labor force and...a strong tradition of husband-wife
families with a traditional division of labor. Latimer (2000) finds Appalachian women have larger average family size and are more likely to be married than women outside the region. Scott (1996) also documents this traditional gender division of labor in her study of Appalachian Kentucky families.

Divorce further restricts women’s labor market options because divorced women are more likely to be responsible for their children’s physical, economic, and emotional welfare (Folbre 1994). These responsibilities are even more intense for African-American women because black communities often have greater rates of poverty than white ones and, consequently, fewer resources to offer these women (Hurst 2004). Regardless of race or geographic location, women’s childrearing responsibilities and the growing demand for part-time labor shape work experiences for women.

The impact of changing family status on gendered labor markets is also related to the decrease in traditional families in Appalachia and the nation as a whole. In 1990, 27.2 percent of households in Appalachia and 26.2 percent of households outside the region were traditional families. The statistic for female-headed households was 5.4 percent in Appalachia and 6.5 percent for non-Appalachian areas. By 2000, the rate of traditional families decreases in both places—22.7 percent of Appalachian and 23.6 percent of U.S. households (Table 2). The rate of single parenthood for Appalachian women is slightly lower than for women outside the region (6.2%, as compared to 7.3%) (ARC 2003).

Table 2: Families and Households in Appalachia and in the Non-Appalachian United States, 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Traditional Families %</th>
<th>Female-headed Households %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-Appalachian U.S.</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appalachia</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Subregion</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Subregion</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Subregion</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Appalachian Regional Commission 2003
Appalachian subregions report similar results—the highest rates of traditional households are found in the Central subregion (23.7%), followed by 23.6 and 21.7 percent in the Southern and Northern subregions, respectively. Likewise, the Northern subregion reports the lowest percent of households classified as female-headed households (5.8%), as compared to 6.1 percent in the Central and 6.6 percent in the Southern subregions. Rural-urban differences in family types and marital status reveal a slightly higher percent of traditional families and a lower percentage of female-headed families in the rural Appalachian counties. Southern Appalachia is the only exception—reporting a higher percent of traditional families in metropolitan areas (ARC 2003). Overall, females in single-headed households are economically disadvantaged and income generation is lower among married women.

This analysis indicates lower educational attainment in Appalachia than outside the region, with decreasing differences between men and women. Shifting marital status—particularly the decline in traditional families combined with the increase of female-headed Appalachian households—present a disadvantage to women in the labor market as outlined in the next section.

Gender and Employment in Appalachia’s Dual-Labor Market

This section analyzes gender differences in employment and income. The discussion focuses on labor-force participation rates, employment status, shifting industrial sectors, and income as a measurement of gender inequality in a labor market, which increasingly divides into core and peripheral sectors. In general, women work fewer hours in formal-waged employment than men because of the growing preference for part-time employment, particularly in female-dominated occupations in the peripheral service sector. In the late 1980s, 20 percent of all workers were employed part time, while over 25 percent of all female employees worked part time. African-American women were more likely to be part-time employees than Caucasian women. In comparison to full-time employees, part-time workers had lower earnings (due to fewer hours), less benefits, and higher levels of occupational segregation (Reskin and Padavic 2003). Gender roles affect these differences in full-time versus part-time employment. For example, some working mothers are forced into part-time work to accommodate domestic responsibilities because daycare or after-school care costs outweigh the benefits of full-time employment.

By 1990, 65.8 percent of individuals sixteen years and older are in the labor force outside of the region. About three-quarters of men (74.9%) are
in the labor market, as compared to 57.4 percent of women. In Appalachia, 59.8 percent of the working-age population is employed, as compared to 69.8 percent of men and 50.8 percent of women. For the non-Appalachian portion of the country, the overall and male rates drop—64.3 and 71 percent, respectively. In 2000, the female rate rises slightly to 57.9 percent. A similar pattern in Appalachia exists—the overall and male rates in 2000 are lower than in 1990 (60.1% and 67.5%, respectively), while in 2000 the female rate rises to 53.3 percent (ARC 2003).

Male and female labor-force participation rates vary among the different subregions of Appalachia. Southern Appalachia has the highest male and female participation rates at 70.5 percent and 55.5 percent, respectively. The Northern subregion has the second highest rate (66.6% males; 52.6% females). The lowest labor-force participation rate occurs in the Central subregion (58.1% males; 45.2% females). In terms of rural-urban differences, the labor-force participation rates are consistently higher in the metropolitan counties than in the urban or rural Appalachian counties (ARC 2003).

The relatively low labor force participation is a topic of considerable discussion in Appalachia and particularly, rural states like West Virginia (Mencken and Maggard 1999; Oberhauser 1995). Reasons for lower rates in this region are related to education, traditional gender roles, and alternative livelihood strategies. In an extensive study of gender and rural economic strategies in Appalachia, Oberhauser (1995, 2002) analyzes the growth of female entrepreneurship in self-employment and home-based work activities. In this area, lack of formal waged employment, domestic responsibilities, and relatively low-skill levels increase women’s participation in these alternative economic activities. In addition, Mencken and Maggard (1999) highlight the prominence of informal sector activities as a response to the economic transformation to the service economy. Their in-depth survey of West Virginia households suggests that about 20 percent of households engage in informal economic activities for income or exchange. These activities, however, mostly supplement formal, income-generating activity (Mencken and Maggard 1999).

Gender differences in the workplace are also evident in hours worked per week and per year. According to Table 3, 66.0 percent of males (16 years and over) in counties outside of Appalachia work 35 hours or more per week, as compared to 45.1 percent of females. The highest rates of full-time employment for both males and females occur in the metropolitan counties (66.6% males; 45.7% females) and the lowest rates occur in the rural counties (61.9% males; 40.6% females) (U.S. Department of Commerce 2000). In Appalachia, 63.0% of males and 41.6% of females work full time. The highest rates of full-time employ-
ment for males and females are in the Southern subregion (66.1% males; 45.7% females) and the metropolitan counties (64.8% males; 43% females). The lowest rates among both men and women occur in Central Appalachia (54.5% males; 36.2% females) and in this region’s rural counties (56.7% males; 37.4% females) (U.S. Department of Commerce 2000).

In 2000, 50.1 percent of male and 31.8 percent of female full-time workers in the non-Appalachian counties of the United States worked year round (Table 3). In this area, the highest rates for full-time, year-round employment are found in the metropolitan counties (50.9% males; 32.4% females) and the lowest rates are in the rural counties (45.0% males; 27.4% females). In contrast, the percent of full-time, year-round workers is lower within Appalachia (48.6% males; 29.5% females), contributing to lower overall economic status of the workforce. According to Table 3, Southern Appalachia has the highest concentration (52.1% males; 32.2% females) and Central Appalachia has the lowest concentration (39.4% males; 23.7% females). Metropolitan counties within Appalachia have the highest proportion of full-time, year-round employment (50.8% males; 31% females), while rural counties have the lowest (41.5% males; 24.8% females) (U.S. Department of Commerce 2000).

Table 3: Percentage of Full-time Workers by Gender, 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-Appalachian U.S.</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th></th>
<th>Females</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FT Work*</td>
<td>FT Work, YR Round</td>
<td>FT Work*</td>
<td>FT Work, YR Round</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metro</td>
<td>66.6</td>
<td>50.9</td>
<td>45.7</td>
<td>32.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>62.6</td>
<td>46.5</td>
<td>42.1</td>
<td>29.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>61.9</td>
<td>45.0</td>
<td>40.6</td>
<td>27.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appalachia</td>
<td>63.0</td>
<td>48.6</td>
<td>41.6</td>
<td>29.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern</td>
<td>61.6</td>
<td>46.9</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>27.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>54.5</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>23.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern</td>
<td>66.1</td>
<td>52.1</td>
<td>45.7</td>
<td>32.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metro</td>
<td>64.8</td>
<td>50.8</td>
<td>43.0</td>
<td>31.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>61.7</td>
<td>46.5</td>
<td>40.2</td>
<td>28.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>56.7</td>
<td>41.5</td>
<td>37.4</td>
<td>24.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Works at least 35 hours per week

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce 2000
The breakdown of employment by industrial sector is another way to analyze gender differences in the labor market. According to dual-labor market theory, industrial activities are divided into two parts: 1) the core or monopoly sector and 2) the periphery or competitive sector (Reid and Rubin 2003). The core sector has greater stability, more opportunity for advancement, higher wages, greater levels of worker satisfaction, and higher levels of unionization than the periphery sector. The firms within this sector "tend to be large, capital intensive, with high productivity per worker, and to possess large, often national and international markets" (Hurst 2004, 218). Nationally, women—especially women of color—often experience isolation in the periphery and service sectors of the labor market (Hurst 2004). The decrease in high-wage industrial jobs increases competition for limited employment opportunities and therefore leads to an even greater confinement of women in lower-paid industrial sectors. Additionally, technological innovations and deskilling eliminate many of the traditional jobs held by women (Tickamyer and Tickamyer 1991).

A comparison of core-industry concentration by gender in 2000 indicates that 64.7 percent of men who live outside of the region are employed in core industries, as compared to 41.3 percent of women (U.S. Department of Commerce 2000).

In Appalachia, 66 percent of all working men are employed in core industries, as compared to 38.4 percent of women. The Southern region has the highest core industry employment at 69 percent for men and 42.4 percent for women. The Central region has the lowest concentration (60.8 percent males; 34.7 percent females). In regards to rural and urban differences, metropolitan counties report the highest percent of men and women who are employed in the core industry. In addition, the percent of core-industry employment is generally the same for rural and urban areas. The biggest difference appears between urban men and women (males 65.3%; 36.8% females) (U.S. Department of Commerce 2000).

The breakdown of the economy into core and periphery sectors is relevant when comparing the effects of industrial restructuring. In 1990, the main industrial composition for Appalachia is similar to the rest of the nation. In 1990, the top five U.S. industries are: manufacturing (17.2%), retail trade (16.8%), health, education, and social services (16.6%), finance, insurance, and real estate (FIRE) (7.1%), and other professional service (6.8%). In comparison, Appalachia’s top five industries in 1990 are: manufacturing (23.4%), health, education, and social services (17.2%), retail trade (17.1%), construction (6.8%), and other professional service (5.1%). In 1990, employment in construction ranks among the top five in Appalachia, but not in the United States as a whole; FIRE ranks among the top five in the United States, but not in the region. It is also
interesting to note that 1.5 percent of employed Appalachians work in the mining industry, as compared to .55 percent outside of the region (ARC 2003).

By 2000, the decline in manufacturing industries is apparent in both areas, but particularly in the non-Appalachian portion of the United States. The top five industries for the non-Appalachian counties are: health, education, and social services (19.9%), manufacturing (13.7%), retail trade (11.7%), professional, scientific, management (9.5%), and arts, entertainment, and recreation (7.9%). Whereas, the top five industries of employment in Appalachia are: health, education, and social services (20.4%), manufacturing (19.2%), retail trade (12.3%), construction (7.4%), and arts, entertainment, and recreation (7.0%) (ARC 2003).

These spatial dimensions of employment shifts are linked to income disparities between Appalachia and outside of the region as well as between men and women. In 2000, the median household income in non-Appalachian counties is $43,084, as compared to $34,780 in Appalachia. The highest rate in Appalachia is found in the Southern subregion ($37,101). The Northern subregion follows at $34,552 and the Central subregion has the lowest median income at $25,861 (ARC 2003).

In 2000, the average median income of women is 70.2 percent of the income for male full-time workers outside of Appalachia, as compared to 70.1 percent in the region (Table 4). The average median incomes for full-time male and female workers are highest in the metropolitan U.S. counties ($38,120 males; $26,882 females) and lowest in the rural counties ($29,796 males; $20,992 females) (U.S. Department of Commerce 2000).

Income variations within the region and by rural/urban location are consistent with the employment statistics outlined in Table 4. Males and females in the Southern subregion have the highest average median income ($32,303 males; $23,101 females) and those in the Central subregion have the lowest ($28,688 males; $20,241 females). The average median incomes for male and female full-time workers are highest in the metropolitan counties ($34,162 males; $23,770 females) and lowest in the rural Appalachian counties ($28,371 males; $20,175 females) (U.S. Department of Commerce 2000).

An even larger gender gap exists in the average, median income for part-time workers. For example, the average median income for part-time female workers in the non-Appalachian counties is 55 percent of males. The average median incomes for part-time male and female workers are highest in the metropolitan counties of the United States and lowest in the rural counties (U.S. Department of Commerce 2000).
Table 4: Average Median Income for Full-time Workers, 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male Income</th>
<th>Female Income</th>
<th>Female/Male %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-Appalachian U.S.</td>
<td>$33,294</td>
<td>$23,391</td>
<td>70.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metro</td>
<td>$38,120</td>
<td>$26,882</td>
<td>70.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>$31,948</td>
<td>$22,253</td>
<td>69.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>$29,796</td>
<td>$20,992</td>
<td>70.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appalachia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Subregion</td>
<td>$32,274</td>
<td>$21,949</td>
<td>68.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Subregion</td>
<td>$28,688</td>
<td>$20,241</td>
<td>70.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Subregion</td>
<td>$32,303</td>
<td>$23,101</td>
<td>71.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metro</td>
<td>$34,162</td>
<td>$23,770</td>
<td>69.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>$32,084</td>
<td>$22,342</td>
<td>69.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>$28,371</td>
<td>$20,175</td>
<td>71.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Appalachian Regional Commission 2003

In Appalachia, the average median income for part-time female workers is $12,455, as compared to $22,673 for males. Male and female part-time workers in Southern Appalachia have the highest average median income ($24,431 males; $13,737 females) and those in the Central subregion have the lowest average median income ($18,325 males; $10,358 females). The average median incomes for male and female part-time workers are highest in the metropolitan counties ($25,429 males; $13,896 females) and lowest in the rural counties of Appalachia ($19,642 males; $10,930 females) (U.S. Department of Commerce 2000).

In sum, gender inequalities in the labor market are apparent in the distribution of workers in core and peripheral sectors, labor-force participation rates, and income disparities. Specifically, women are more concentrated in service sector industries and peripheral jobs, while men are disproportionately active in core employment sectors. Women also are more likely to work part time than men and have lower rates of participation in the labor force. These indicators translate to lower incomes among women, particularly those in rural areas. Researchers conclude that women's average hourly earnings are significantly lower than men's partly due to childcare responsibilities as well as gender and racial discrimination (Folbre 1994; Caiazza 2002). In the next section, we outline public policy measures to address these gender and spatial inequalities.
Impact of Public Policy on Gender and Work

Public policy has considerable effect on women’s economic status by influencing access to higher education, paternity/maternity leave, childcare, and health care and family planning. State policies help families meet their childcare responsibilities and ease women’s transition between work in the home and in the labor market. Most U.S. policies directed at aiding families in labor-market participation, however, fall short of offering effective support for human capital investment (Seccombe and Warner 2004).

Labor-market policies increasingly play an important role in a post-industrial economy, where approximately 45 percent of workers do not have a standard “9 to 5 Monday through Friday” work schedule. Married couples most frequently describe themselves as dual-earner couples, as compared to almost 60 percent of single parents who are employed full time (Seccombe and Warner 2004). Education and training are the crucial links to finding occupations that pay self-sufficient wages in a post-industrial economy (Pearce and Brooks 2002). It is vital for future research to document policies variations—including the effect on workers and their families both inside and outside Appalachia.

Welfare policies designed to assist the poor also affect the extent of female poverty in Appalachia. As discussed previously, gender gaps in education, work, and income contribute to the trend that female-headed households have the highest poverty levels of any family type in the United States (Seccombe and Warner 2004). Consequently, women and their children are disproportionately affected by the quality and type of income-assistance programs available for unemployed and underemployed workers. Public assistance policies often follow a pattern similar to the dual-labor market—making individuals who are disadvantaged in the labor market less likely to get adequate welfare benefits (Pearce 1986). These disadvantaged workers (disproportionately women) must rely on the highly stigmatized and less financially supportive social assistance programs, such as AFDC/TANF, Food Stamps, Medicaid, and public housing (Latimer 1999, 2003; Pearce 1986; Pearce and McAdoo 1981).

In 1996, federal and state government significantly downsized and restructured social assistance programs—rapidly shrinking the time-limited safety net for low-income individuals. Prior to welfare reform, researchers found significant rural deficits in public assistance benefits (Pearce 1986; Rank 1994; Tickamyer et al. 1993). Cuoto (1994) documents that Appalachian states (particularly in the Southern area) have lower average monthly AFDC payments than the rest of the nation and less cash assistance available to single individuals. Additionally, Appalachian states are less likely than states outside the region to supplement their
federal funds with state monies and maintain a limited general medical assistance program—if one exists at all.

Rural sociologists document the impact of welfare reform—more negative consequences on welfare recipients and their families—in rural areas than in urban settings (Fletcher et al. 2000; Gennetian, Redcross, and Miller 2000; Goetz and Freshwater 1997). For example, individuals who leave the welfare system (i.e., TANF leavers) in the predominantly rural state of West Virginia have a higher rate of recidivism—returning to the system—and a lower rate of employment than the national averages for “leavers” (Latimer 2004). In addition, McGaha and Latimer (2003) find that 72 percent of TANF leavers in West Virginia experience significant hardship—unable to afford food, medicine, and health care after leaving the system. Of this group, 43 percent report being food insecure, as compared to 33 percent nationally (McGaha and Latimer 2003). Although no systematic study has been initiated on the effects of welfare reform on the region, studies conducted in individual Appalachian states suggest that a similar process is occurring (Dyk and Zimmerman 2000; Tickamyer et al. 2000; Zimmerman and Garkovich 1998).

Conclusion

This article analyzes the relationship between gender and socio-economic status within the context of Appalachian regional development. Historical employment patterns—separating men and women into formal and informal work—persist in areas of the contemporary labor market. Economic restructuring contributes to significant shifts in the labor market. As job loss occurs in male-dominated, extractive and manufacturing industries, employment in areas of the female-dominated service sector increases. Socio-economic and demographic indicators, however, reveal continuing regional disparities between men and women regarding employment status, labor-force participation, income, and poverty.

The discussion offers four general findings from the 2000 Census data on gender and spatial differences in educational attainment, work, and other factors, which contribute to overall economic status. First, males and females in the region are more economically disadvantaged than their counterparts living in the non-Appalachian U.S. counties. Second, women—regardless of their location—are more disadvantaged than men in all areas. In addition, individuals inside and outside of region are the most disadvantaged when they reside in rural counties—particularly Appalachian women. Fourth, within Appalachian counties, individuals living in the Central subregion—again, especially women—trail their counterparts in the Northern and Southern subregions on all key economic indicators.
The spatial dimensions of socio-economic inequality between Appalachia and the rest of the country are particularly evident in educational attainment, employment, and income. Appalachia is disadvantaged in comparison to the rest of the United States in all of these areas. First, individuals in the non-Appalachian portion of the United States have a high school attainment rate approximately 4 percent higher and a college graduation rate about 7.5 percent higher than those in the region. In addition, approximately a four-percent difference exists in labor-force participation, a three-and-a-half-percent difference in full-time employment, and a two-percent difference in year-round employment between Appalachia and outside the region. Moreover, the average median income for full-time Appalachian workers is about $1,500 less than workers outside the region; the average median income for part-time workers is $1,800 less.

Indicators of gender differences in education, employment, and income reveal the bleak economic status of women—both nationally and in Appalachia—with some exceptions. For example, women's college graduation rate is about 2.5 percent lower than men's inside and outside of the region. In contrast, high school graduation rates are improving for women with slightly higher rates in 2000 than in 1990. On average, a fourteen-percent difference exists between Appalachia and the non-Appalachian United States in the labor-force participation rate, an eleven-and-a-half-percent difference in full-time employment, and a nine-percent difference in year-round employment for men and women. On average, about 25 percent fewer women than men work in the core industries of the economy. The average-median income for full-time male workers is $9,670 more than for full-time female workers. When you compare the median incomes for part-time workers, the gender gap is even larger—approximately $10,700.

To understand gender dynamics in Appalachia, one must analyze racial and ethnic differences among women. Feminist researchers underscore how diversity among women is socially constructed, yet yields significant economic disadvantages to women of color, who face discrimination on the basis of gender, race, and often class. This article articulates specific aspects of minority women's overall low socio-economic status in regards to poverty, education, and employment. While case studies of women of color in the South provide useful insight into the effects of gender, race, and ethnicity on women's experiences with poverty (Dill and Williams 1996; Smith 1999b), systematic analyses of census data on minority women's socio-economic status are minimal. For further discussion of overall spatial patterns and trends of race and ethnicity in Appalachia, see the article by Hayden in this issue.
The rural disadvantage is prevalent in Appalachia and outside of the region. In general, the college graduation rate is lower among rural people, especially in Appalachia where isolation, lack of transportation, and traditional cultural values prevail. As indicated in our discussion, educational attainment is closely related to economic status and participation in the labor market. Employment measures are also differentiated between rural and urban areas of Appalachia. Males in urban areas are more likely to work full time (5% difference in Appalachia), while 40.2 percent of urban females and only 37.4 percent of rural females are employed full time in the region. Finally, the average median income for urban workers, as compared to rural workers, is higher among both men and women in Appalachia and non-Appalachian counties.

Finally, socio-economic disparities are found within Appalachia. The Central subregion is among the least educated and poorest areas in the country. In comparison to the Northern and Southern subregions, this area has the lowest college graduation rates for both men and women (10.5% and 10.8%, respectively), compared to 20.6 percent and 18 percent in the Southern subregion. Additionally, both men and women in the Central subregion have the lowest proportion of full-time workers. In terms of median income, females and males in this subregion earn the least amount, as compared to the regional average income. The comparison between Central Appalachia and the region for females is $20,241 and $22,090, respectively. Reasons for these disparities are partly due to the historical dependence on resource-extractive industries and the predominantly rural and isolated nature of this mountainous area.

Policies and programs designed to remove the structural and cultural barriers to the workplace, and to encourage further education would benefit all disadvantaged groups— but especially women. Several factors continue to affect women’s labor-force participation rate and where they find employment: the combination of traditional gender-role expectations, sex discrimination, and structural changes in the economy, which increase temporary or part-time employment. More welfare recipients and their families who live in rural areas suffer as a result of contemporary welfare reform than city dwellers. These recipients receive less money. The states where they live have smaller state budgets and inadequate medical assistance. In conclusion, gender is an important dimension of socio-economic analyses, which exposes inequalities within the population and provides an explanation for differences in employment, education, and income— relating to the social construction of men’s and women’s roles.
Notes

1. See Common Elements section of the introduction to this volume for definitions of Appalachia, its subregions, and county classifications.
2. Traditional families are married couple families with at least one of their own children living at home.
3. The following industries are classified as core industries: construction, manufacturing, wholesale trade, transportation/warehousing/utilities, information, finance/insurance/real estate/rental and leasing, professional/scientific management/administrative and waste management services, and public administration. The remaining industries (i.e., agriculture/forestry/fishing/mining, retail trade, educational/health/social services, arts/entertainment/recreation/accommodations/food services, and other services) are periphery industries.
4. The core employment rate for women in Northern Appalachia is 34.6 percent.
5. Manufacturing employment is highest in Southern Appalachia (21.7%), as compared to the Northern (16.7%) and Central (17.3%) subregions.
6. Seven states (Georgia, Florida, Indiana, Louisiana, New Mexico, Michigan, and West Virginia) implemented programs — often funded by state lottery systems — which provide a “free” college education to state residents who complete high school with a “B” average. Participants must maintain that average in college. In Georgia, nearly 750,000 individuals participated in the HOPE Scholarship Program between September 1993 and April 2004 (Georgia Department of Technical and Adult Education 2004).

References


