

The Effects of Education on Life for Women: Appalachian

Mountain Region of the United States of America

Allison Gardiner

Copper Hills High School

## The Effects of Education on Life for Women: Appalachian Mountain

### Region of the United States of America

#### **Introduction:**

Women living in mountainous areas throughout the world are faced with a variety of problems, depending on the mountainous location and other social, economic, and developmental factors that location can influence (Latimer & Oberhauser, 2004, pp. 1, 3). One of these places is the Appalachian Region in the United States, prone to transportation, education, and economic limits (Latimer & Oberhauser, 2004, pp. 3, 5, 6). However, at the bottom of these issues is education. The lack of education in the Appalachian Region makes it impossible for women to excel in economics, status, and other areas that affect their lives. When women don't go to school, they can't change their circumstances very well because economic success depends on education (Latimer & Oberhauser, 2004, pp. 6). Economic situation affects living standards and status as well (Bollinger, Ziliak, & Troske, 2009, pp. 1). Settling for less or being pressured to do so is part of the education problem in Appalachia (Latimer & Oberhauser, 2004, pp. 6). This paper will discuss economic problems and how they cause problems in other areas for women of this region. It will also try to provide solutions to these problems, relating to strengthening education in order to strengthen the lives of those in this area.

#### **Part I: Education in Appalachia**

##### **A. Current Education:**

According to a research paper done by Christopher Bollinger, James P. Ziliak, and Kenneth R. Troske, "Appalachia...lags behind the rest of the country in educational achievement and income" (Bollinger, Ziliak, & Troske, 2009, pp. 4). By putting these two factors together,

this statement may indicate the connection between education and income. As of 2000, most women (around 87 percent) went to high school, and 12.8 percent didn't make it all the way through high school (Bollinger, Ziliak, & Troske, 2009, pp. 38). Only 6 percent of women received Master's Degrees or something of a higher level (Bollinger, Ziliak, & Troske, 2009, pp. 38). Also, Appalachia tends to have increased quality of living when people have opportunities in education, college being an important part of that growth (Bollinger, Ziliak, & Troske, 2009, pp. 10). Evidence of the importance of going to college is shown in the increased ability of people to live where they can be sustained with above average jobs according to their "high skills" (Bollinger, Ziliak, & Troske, 2009, pp. 6, 7, 8, 13, 22). The next section discusses why it simply is not that easy to advance through college.

### **B. Limits of Education:**

If college is the key to better jobs and therefore more money, then why don't all women in Appalachia just go to college? There are varying reasons to answer this question, but one is that women sometimes settle for less because of 'quick' money (Latimer & Oberhauser, 2004, pp. 6). They see opportunities for work in the near future that won't give much money, and sometimes trade a college education for other areas of work that are less difficult and more readily available (Latimer & Oberhauser, 2004, pp. 6). Problems with education can also be determined from problems with jobs and careers (Latimer & Oberhauser, 2004, pp. 7, 8). Some women are busy with families, and they don't attend college when they have work and other things preoccupying them (Latimer & Oberhauser, 2004, pp. 7, 8). Also, "traditional expectations about gender roles tend to ... prevent women from entering into better paying occupations and limit their advancement within what are considered "men's jobs"" (Latimer & Oberhauser, 2004, pp. 8).

Unfortunately, education cannot fix everything. There are problems in the workforce for women, when “in 2000, the average median income of women [was] 70.2 percent of the income for male full-time workers outside of Appalachia, as compared to 70.1 percent in the region” (Latimer & Oberhauser, 2004, pp. 14). While women can't completely control what happens to them at work, they can control some of the things that happen to them, including educational attainment. Differences exist throughout the United States, suggesting that economic problems for women do not occur only in mountainous regions of the world (Latimer & Oberhauser, 2004, pp. 14).

## **Part II: Effects of Education in Other Areas of Women's Lives**

### **A. Economics, Society, and Family:**

Looking back at some of the previous statistics in section A of Part I, only 6 percent of women had Master's Degrees (Bollinger, Ziliak, & Troske, 2009, pp. 38). Furthermore, women with Master's Degrees were able to get almost 200 percent what they would have gotten without education (Bollinger, Ziliak, & Troske, 2009, pp. 34). This suggests that increasingly higher degrees of education can make women's lives many-fold better. Education affects women's economic status in Appalachia, as shown by people in a study in the mid-1990's in Appalachia (Genco, 2007, pp. 2, 4). They must have known that education precedes money, for some people in college were struggling economically beforehand (Genco, 2007, pp. 2, 4). Education can have far reaching effects in women's lives, not just economically. Social and familial relationships can increase through education. Through education, women can eventually be teachers or have other professions and help other generations as well as break traditional cycles of “periphery jobs” (Proffit, Sale, & Andrews, 2004, pp. 4; Latimer & Oberhauser, 2004, pp. 13, 20). Women who

are unfortunate to have to provide for an entire family could have a way to make more money after college by putting any extra money they have for the time they are in college or community colleges (Latimer & Oberhauser, 2004, pp. 8, 10, 16; Genco, 2007, pp. 1).

### **B: Other Viewpoints**

Other viewpoints include the fact that good jobs are lacking in Appalachia, and that plays an influence of economics for women (Latimer & Oberhauser, 2004, pp. 13). However, a solution to this problem would be for those who do go to college and attain a sustainable education to incorporate their knowledge into Appalachia by starting jobs that teach others and then let them work as semi-educated workers in that profession. For example, women could invest in education for engineering, and eventually become engineers. They could come back and work on research for other companies or even create their own company, and then teach their skills to other men and women of the Appalachian Region. The main point is that the solution is based on education. One person can help make a difference through their own personal education. Education can help increase good jobs available to counteract the current lack. Another argument to the effectiveness of education is that women have other priorities than education, and that is true (Latimer & Oberhauser, 2004, pp. 7, 8). Families and education combined creates a difficult situation for mothers and families, but education over time is a long-term investment that can be helpful, especially if it can be done at home or in small segments of time weekly (Proffit, Sale, & Andrews, 2004, pp. 4).

## **Part III: What to do?**

### **A: Solutions**

Education is beneficial to everyone, everywhere; not just in the mountains. Education can break the cycle of economic struggle. Some people in Appalachia that invest in work before

education can struggle with improving livelihood. For example, farmers in Appalachia have known that life is hard economically without money to produce well (Cheek & Nix, 2006, pp. 472). One person in Georgia expressed this economic difficulty and it didn't seem that farming would change those circumstances on a large scale (Cheek & Nix, 2006, pp. 472). The difficult situation that "periphery jobs" create further illustrates why education can play an important role in changing the way that people work and live (Latimer & Oberhauser, 2004, pp. 13, 20). Solutions to this are to teach people how they can go to college, even in geographically difficult regions (Latimer & Oberhauser, 2004, pp. 5). Also, parents can teach their children of ways they can have improved circumstances and move on from mediocre jobs (Latimer & Oberhauser, 2004, pp. 6). Women can also take what they have learned in college and apply it in Appalachia (Proffit, Sale, & Andrews, 2004, pp. 4).

**Conclusion:**

Women in the Appalachian Region face many issues, but they can be improved. Mediocre jobs, family situations, and low school achievements are among the issues at hand (Latimer & Oberhauser, 2004, pp. 6, 7, 8). However, with some education, each of these issues can be made smaller. Education is not only stressed for mountainous regions of the world, but in any region. Education gives women the ability to perform valued tasks and receive rewards which help sustain them in their pursuits. Thus, education should be sought after when economic struggles come, as well as social struggles. Education helps people to communicate with others, make money, provide for necessities, pay for healthcare, and avoid doing dangerous or undesirable jobs for money. Education for better jobs can help break unwanted cycles and therefore affect the lives of many in the Appalachian Region and other places of the world.

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