

RE-ENTRY OF WOMEN INTO ADULT EDUCATION

by

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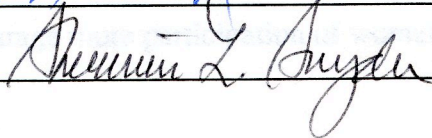
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Abstract

Until the 20th Century, it was not considered necessary that women be educated beyond the formal school years. Today's woman has cast off the constraints and is returning to adult education for many reasons--improvement of life style and career, changes in life situations and just to enjoy leisure time.

Surveys were distributed to 150 women in the Phoenix area regarding who has been involved in adult education, why they have participated, where they were able to take classes or courses, how the sponsoring organization aided in their re-entry and what benefits they received from this additional education.

The results showed what the literature had predicted--middle aged women are major participants in adult education, therefore there is a correlation between the age of women and their re-entry into education. The main reasons for continuing education are career improvement and improving skills.

Institutions offering education for the non-traditional student have to change their policies to encourage more participation of women.

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Chapter I

THE PROBLEM

Introduction

For many women, access to education, whether in schools or outside them, signifies the chance to discard traditional ideas about women's place and replace them with more expansive concepts of female identity. Women have been going back to school in unprecedented numbers thus constituting one of the most significant movements in adult and higher education (Axford, 1980).

Background

In the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Europe and America, the education of women dealt with a variety of domestic and decorous arts--dancing, needlework, religion and any subjects that were needed to prepare them for their appropriate station in life. A woman's station depended on her class, therefore education differed by class. In general, women across the classes were educated in piety and prudence, so they would be good wives and mothers. Their liberal learning was designed to enhance women's ability to perform these roles just as their learning in needlework or cookery.

In 1887 Rebecca N. Hazard wrote a paper entitled "Home Studies for Women," in which she recommended that women who desired enrichment and broader cultural horizons should form home study clubs to read and discuss great poets and writers of the road (Griffith, 1980). Most educating of women was done in the home by governesses, tutors or parents. If it was done away from the familial home, the young ladies were educated in convents or dame schools. It was considered inappropriate for a young woman to have a liberal education. She would have no need of such knowledges when she became a wife, mother or member of a religious order--the only vocations available to females at that time.

Despite these attitudes toward educating women, in the late nineteenth century, it became necessary for females to have access to the fields of knowledge dealing with mathematics, sciences, etc. because women were filling positions of teachers and nurses. For them to be effective in these jobs, they had to learn enough in a variety of disciplines to do their work effectively.

In today's world, most young women are afforded the same educational opportunities as their male counterparts. They are encouraged to set their sights on the careers of their choice, but at the same time they are expected to excel as wives and mothers, the roles which they were assigned for so many centuries.

Women have become "a social problem" and their education and intellectual fulfillment are subjects of debate because they are victims of the technological and social changes that occurred during this past century. Women of all socioeconomic groups have been affected by these changes and by the demand for new freedoms. The burgeoning of interest in continuing education for women, a higher rate of literacy for females and opportunities to learn in non-conventional settings indicate the type and amount of influence these social changes have generated.

Areas of Concern

Until the start of the women's movement in the 1960's, adult education for women was considered to be a middle class phenomenon, but this is no longer the case. Within reentry populations, there are many diverse and special-needs groups. The size and composition of this population will determine the need for divergent and different programs.

The number of women enrolled in adult education has quadrupled in the past 20 years (Boone, 1980). Social forces and personal motivations have been factors in these increased numbers.

Educational institutions have introduced special programs and flexible curricula for

women who wish to pursue adult education. Formal school campus sites are being vacated and programs are being moved to community-based sites so women will find it more convenient.

Purpose of Study

This study is being done to identify who the women are that are participating in adult education in the Phoenix area and what the reasons are for reentry into educational courses.

To be of value to women of all ages, the educational institution, be it high school, college, place of employment or recreation or community center, must provide convenient sites for classes, orientation to the program, counseling, support and financial aid if needed. This study will discover if the involved institutions are helping the women returning to further their education.

Rationale for Study

The U.S. Department of Education has determined that from 1989 through the year 2000, two out of three new entrants to the labor force will be women. Women will comprise nearly half (47%) of the paid labor force (Watson, 1989).

For the first time in history, a majority of all jobs will require education or training beyond high school. Many single mothers, displaced homemakers and minority women workers have less than a high school education, therefore it will be necessary for these women to participate in literacy and job training programs if they are to be full participants in the workforce.

Women are returning to education for its own sake, change and challenge. They are looking for new and alternative careers and to raise their self esteem. As adults they are better students because they are attending classes to get the most out of them.

The proportion of older women in the United States' population continues to rise faster than other age groups. By the mid 21st century almost half of the women in the

United States will be 55 years of age or older. These women are looking for worthwhile activities to occupy their time after retirement or after the children are grown and on their own. They often seek courses that provide a sense of meaning (philosophy, religion, language arts) or courses that provide a sense of control or the ability to cope (physical education, health care, sciences, business courses, home economics, etc.) (Long, 1987).

It will be necessary for businesses, educational institutions, and community-based organizations to recognize the importance of adult education. Barriers affecting participation by women must be addressed.

Definition of Terms

Functional Illiteracy - The inability to read, write, calculate or solve problems at a level that enables an adult to handle even the most simple tasks.

Functional Literacy - The ability to use printed information to function in society, achieve goals and develop knowledge and potential (Calivati, 1990).

Reentry Woman - Someone who left school to take a job or assume family responsibilities, but who is currently seeking to return to school (Lewis, 1988).

Adult Education - Systematic and purposive efforts by adults to become educated people, usually occurring after formal education or what is called "schooling" (Long, 1987).

Continuing Education - Education that adults take for purposes of keeping up with new knowledge, to master new concepts, to keep up with change in relevant basic disciplines, to prepare for new careers to continue to grow as a well-rounded person, and to retain the power to learn (Smith, 1976).

Retraining - Educating women in new jobs so they can continue employment when their jobs are eliminated by new technology.

Displaced Homemakers - Women who are suddenly widowed or divorced and find they have the major responsibility for the financial support of their families.

Career - Vocation or profession when entered upon as a lifework.

Female Occupations - Careers in which women dominate, such as teaching, nursing or office jobs.

Vocational Education - Courses that have specific and occupational purpose and are oriented to occupational ends usually used to train, up-date and extend skills in employees.

Research Questions

Women from the age of 18 to senior citizen age are returning to formal and informal learning situations. Various reasons from improving quality of life to training for a career change to improving self esteem and to fulfillment of one's life with worthwhile leisure time activities are given by women for their interest in adult education.

This research is seeking answers to the following questions.

1. What is the age of these women returning to continuing education?
2. Is there a correlation between age and the reasons women have for participating in adult education?
3. Can one find an association between the location where classes are offered and the process of re-entry of women?
4. Does the aid given by the sponsoring organization have a bearing on the number of women who participate in adult education?
5. Is there a relationship between the above areas and what classes or courses are taken by women?
6. What personal benefits have women gained from adult education?

Limitations of Study

The limitations of this study is the lack of predictive power. We can predict "what is" but cannot predict "what will be" in the next year much less next century.

The advantage or strength in using a descriptive method is that data collected from

interviews and questionnaires is somewhat accurate and representative of women in various occupations and age areas. It describes reasons for returning to formal education be it for practical use or leisure time.

One disadvantage is this researcher will not be able to determine how adult education will benefit the subjects who are surveyed and interviewed because the results of this education, be they positive or negative, will not begin to be seen in many areas for a number of years. Success for many women will not be immediate and may require modifications.

Significance of Study

The world is changing at an increasing rate. Planning predicted on the past has yielded useful concepts and processes, but the past is no longer a useful guide to the present and a distinctly uncertain guide to the future. (Boshier, 1980).

Future concepts will stem from the fact that the earth is transforming from an industrial era to a technology-based world that deals with ecological and humanistic values. If adults cease to learn, developed societies run the danger of falling into disarray. For the first time in history, education is now engaged in preparing women for a society which does not yet exist (Knowles, 1990).

As community and business organizations use existing facilities and equipment to their fullest, they look for opportunities to aid the adult learner. This research is looking for the places where classes are being conducted to make learning more convenient for women. It is also interested in discovering what these organizations have done to encourage women in their quest for life-long learning.

Institutions and organizations that support education for women are finding it necessary to tear down barriers that have discouraged women for participating in adult education. Guidance and counseling that encourages women to seek non-traditional careers, flexible course schedules, convenient locations, programs that help with

dependent care and continued legislation from local and national government to encourage adult education will help women as the country moves into the 21st century.

Women of the world are searching for equality in all areas. Since knowledge is power, it is necessary for women to re-enter the field of adult education. The increase in number of employed females, the increased life span of women, the number of single parent families and the stresses of daily life have contributed to the number of women who are making life-long learning a necessity if they are to continue to be significant forces as the world heads toward the twenty-first century.

Chapter II

THE LITERATURE REVIEW

One of the most notable trends in the last two decades has been the dramatic increase in adult and continuing education among women. Factors such as human potential, changing demographic profiles, inflation, advanced technology, divorce and growth in the number of one-parent and dual career households have prompted participation by women who had previously deferred career preparation, college or continuing education. In addition, women's development of political consciousness, greater self-awareness and need to be self-supporting are more factors that have affected women's life patterns and spurred women's participation in education.

By the year 2000, the number of non-traditional women students is expected to double (Lewis, 1988). Program planners, administrators, instructors, and counselors must become aware of the need to develop programs to service this growing population.

American Educational Research Association (AERA) has one division, Special Interest Group (SIG)--Research on Women and Education which has grown more than any of its other divisions (Antler, 1990). The main interest of the organization is studying gender to promote change in education and encourage research of educators working in communities to develop knowledge and education of women. Researchers are now identifying intellect as operating in kindergartens, child study clubs, health collectives and on the women's pages of newspapers and magazines. Studies of formal and informal education enlarge our understanding of intellect so it encompasses care. They also enlarge our understanding of public life so it encompasses reproduction as well as production and honors the labor that nourishes people as well as the labor that produces things.

Who the Participants Are in Adult Education

Women of all ages from young adulthood to senior citizen are discovering that educational development is important for the highest quality of life. They are seeking knowledge related to self, family, local, national and international citizenship. With women surviving men on the average of 16 - 17 years, it is becoming necessary for them to continue their education.

In today's world we are astounded to learn that illiteracy is reaching alarming proportions. Millions of women (age 18 and above, out of school) lack sufficient educational skills required to participate fully as mothers, employees and citizens. One in eight women has less than a high school education (Communications, technologies in adult, career and vocational education, 1990). The increase in illiteracy in women can be attributed to school dropouts and immigrants who cannot read or write in English, therefore have difficulty functioning in daily activities. Adult basic education (ABE) programs have been developed to aid these women if they desire to improve their position. In the school year 1989-1990, 16,694 females in Arizona were enrolled in adult education programs to improve basic skills (Jelinek, 1990). The federal government in an attempt to stimulate economic growth has recognized the connection between impoverished women and illiteracy and has made provisions for dealing with these problems.

Some women have returned to adult classes because they were denied the opportunity earlier in life for various reasons. This group of women usually falls into the 35 - 45 year age category (Aslanian, 1980). They feel their life style gives them the time, money and opportunity to spend on continuing education.

Changing technologies are making it necessary for women 25 - 54 who wish to expand their employment opportunities, to train in vocational areas such as computer skills, communication skills and teamwork skills (Women, work and literacy, 1990).

Senior centers have been instrumental in recruiting women, who qualify as senior citizens, into adult learning. At this time in one's life, one can spend time pursuing knowledge in areas of special interest. Perhaps it's a course in handicrafts, gardening, aerobics for seniors, golf, religion, health or some other area which a woman may not have had time for in earlier life. As life spans lengthen women are putting the added years to intellectual use.

In addition, Carol B. Aslanian and Henry M Brickell (1990) in Americans in Tradition report that women who have gone beyond high school are more likely to be involved in adult education, more women from higher income brackets are engaged in learning as opposed to those from lower income brackets, and employed females are more likely to participate in educational endeavors than those who are unemployed. Women employed in professional and business fields, those with less than five children, and those who live in more urban areas seemed to have a stronger desire for continued learning. Whites supply a large share of learners. Among minorities, Orientals supply more learners than Hispanics, with the black minority having the lowest number.

Demographic differences of learners are correlated with the reasons for either pursuing or not seeking adult education.

Why Women are Pursuing Adult Education

Today's women work with knowledge as well as with things and people. Those who are most successful at work, as a parent or as an organization member, have developed a repertoire of effective strategies for alternating between action problems and knowledge resources.

There are many personal motivations for the reentry woman to participate in adult education. To be of interest to the learner, the activity must be relevant and the influences that encourage one to participate must be stronger than those that discourage one.

The young single mother who is searching for a better life for her child may take classes in parenting and family planning. If she hasn't completed her formal education, she may return to school to earn a GED, thus making up for education she missed. She may even find it necessary to learn basic skills to overcome functional illiteracy.

Women have been positioned in many female-dominated occupations that have weekly wages below poverty level, provide few or no benefits and few opportunities for advancement. With new technologies, many office jobs have disappeared thus causing a pool of displaced women who will need career training and retraining in technical skills.

Some women just go back to school for the enjoyment of learning or a desire for professional growth (Pitman, 1986). This could be characterized by the person who might take an evening course in conversational French rather than join a bridge club.

As some women see their own children go off to college, they may feel discontent and return to the classroom to begin or complete their education that was interrupted when they chose to marry and have a family.

Major events in the family lives of women often stimulate or require them to learn more so they can cope with or take advantage of new circumstances, such as:

- 1) Getting married - one may want to learn about food growing and preparation, nutrition, and other domestic areas.
- 2) Becoming pregnant - classes in pre-natal care, childbirth, child care and general parenting may be of value at this time.
- 3) Becoming separated, a displaced homemaker, a woman who is suddenly widowed or divorced - classes in self esteem, stress management, single parenting, and perhaps, even marriage counseling are often important to women in these situations.
- 4) Increases or decreases in income - if one's salary rises, it may be necessary to learn about financial management, but if it decreases, a class in budgeting may be of value.
- 5) Injury or illness - courses in promoting better health, such as aerobics, weight loss,

reducing the intake of alcohol or drugs, smoking cessation, as well as learning how to care for those with serious illness, such as cancer, AIDS or diabetes often are necessary for today's woman.

6) Retirement - upon cessation of work a woman has more time to seek out leisure activities. So this will be an excellent period in life in which to take classes which she always wanted to take but never had time for. To become skilled in sports, crafts, hobbies, music, art or dance will require some education. This is also a good time in life to become part of groups that learn a foreign language, enjoy reading and discussing books and just taking classes to keep one's mind active. Since one has more time to relax, it can be a time for a woman to become truly active in religious practice which requires constant learning and adaptation to changes in society.

Women have more opportunities now to fill upper management positions in business, education and government. As a result of these new openings, females may be returning to campuses to earn higher degrees that will give them the necessary educational background to qualify for these positions.

The need for or interest in adult education has a higher degree of importance for women who have a higher level of formal education (Venesy, 1984). Continuing education helps to make a well rounded person.

What Sponsoring Organizations or Institutions are Doing For The Reentry Woman.

Barriers to adult education can be classified in three groups (Cross 1981).

1) Situational barriers are those that arise from a situation in life at a given time, such as lack of time due to home or job responsibilities, lack of transportation, geographical isolation, lack of child care, etc.

2) Dispositional barriers are those that refer to attitudes about learning and perceptions of oneself as a learner. Feeling "too old" to learn, lack of confidence and boredom with

school are examples of this type of barrier.

3) Institutional barriers include those erected by learning institutions or organizations that tend to exclude or discourage certain groups of learners. These can be inconvenient schedules, restrictive locations, lack of financial aid and lack of orientation for reentry women.

Common components of programs and services for returning women are counseling and support. The nontraditional student views her college attendance as a means to make a career change or advance to obtain greater life satisfaction, or to help herself through a transition in her life. She tends to feel out of place on campus and has more realistic perceptions about the world of work. Universities are attempting to make reentering females more comfortable by organizing individual and group therapy sessions that work on coping strategies. Weekend-evening counseling hours and even telephone counseling sessions have been set up.

Childcare is a pressing concern of a reentry woman. Institutions have creatively solved this problem. For example, Pennsylvania State University at New Kensington has a childcare center in the main classroom building. The center is run by parent volunteers who work in exchange for care of their own children and is a short term service to be used while mothers are in class or participating in other academic pursuits. The center is also used as an observation site for students learning about early childhood education (Lewis, 1988).

Single mothers who are on welfare are offered dormitory suites on campus for themselves and their children. Thus the parent can attend college without jeopardizing her assistance checks.

Special programs have been set up for the displaced homemaker--generally described as twenty-seven years old or older and previously employed primarily as a homemaker, not as a paid worker who has lost the financial support of those on whom she depended

(Bagley, 1983). These programs may include paid internship or permanent job placements, career planning sessions, academic coursework and professional and personal development workshops. Other areas include sessions to increase self-confidence by giving instruction in handling money, how to get what one wants out of life, women and the law.

Workshops and seminars provided by organizations run the gamut of possibilities. Regardless of the topic, the purpose is primarily to help reentry women deal with some of the burdens and anxieties placed on them when they return to school.

Flexible schedules are in demand, thus organizations, such as universities, colleges, businesses, etc. are providing not only evening classes, but weekend courses so they don't interfere with family responsibilities.

Universities are sponsoring educational programs for senior citizens away from formal campuses, usually at senior centers, public schools, church halls, nutrition sites, senior residences and nursing homes, because older women often find it difficult to travel to the campus due to the fact that they would be going into unfamiliar territory.

Sponsoring organizations must listen to potential education clients. Programs must be designed to help women achieve their objectives and differentiated to meet need according to level of education, income, occupation and age. When the programs have been organized, they should be publicized through sources that reach the potential learners, such as publications of libraries, churches, employers, voluntary associations and flyers from the sponsoring organization itself.

Often women find the need for continuing education, but do not have the financial resources to pursue their goal. Recently schools have made available more monies for student loans for the nontraditional student. More support is needed in the area of campus honors and awards for the reentry woman, as well as offering scholarships to worthy recipients.

Long range planning needs to address the needs of adult women students whether they are twenty-five or of retirement age. Programs and services must be adapted to fit these needs.

Conclusion

Past, present or future change in the lives of women is the reason for adult learning. This adult education is being pursued by women from eighteen to post-retirement ages.

Learning basic skills, learning how to use new machines acquired by employers, learning child-care and parenting skills, learning the histories of a religion one might be joining, learning how to play tennis or golf, learning how to care for aging parents in declining health, learning about personal health problems, etc. are all reasons given by women for continuing education.

In an effort to accommodate the nontraditional female student, organizations and institutions may have had to revise programs, schedules and places where classes will be offered. They must be responsive to the differences in background, preparation and aspirations of individual women.

In a research study done by Thomas G. Sticht and Barbara A. McDonald, it was demonstrated that a mother's education has a strong relationship to children's performance in schools. To make life more meaningful for women there must be life-long learning.

Chapter III

DESCRIPTION OF METHODOLOGY

Studies have been done by Mary Anne Pitman, Cynthia Bagley, Patricia Cross, John Valley and the Florida State Department of Education about women reentering adult education. As a result of these studies educators have been assisted in meeting the needs of nontraditional women students. Demographic changes are causing organizations, agencies and educational institutions to turn more of their attention away from childhood programs to those suitable for adults.

Methodology

The descriptive method of research is being used in this study. Statistics will be used for comparison of data, analysis of data and interpretation of research findings. Narrative discourse will be used to explain the statistics. The variables will be described, the phenomenon of which these variables are part and the degree of relationship between them.

Data will be gathered by distributing surveys (Appendix, Page 42) to a cross-section of women. This researcher distributed surveys to women at places of employment personally. Professional employees, as well as those in positions requiring less education, such as secretaries, food service workers and custodians were included. Older women were also surveyed at a senior center.

Homemakers from the researcher's neighborhood were asked to participate. Some surveys were distributed in a local business, at a bank, at a local hospital and at a church organization by relatives and friends. This researcher felt she would get a broad range of ages and educational backgrounds collecting data at these places.

Hand distribution and collection gave her the needed numbers to work with because often people tend to disregard surveys that are distributed through the mail.

Using a closed questionnaire format, participants were forced to choose one of the alternatives provided by the researcher. This closed form was also a guide to participants along pertinent lines of thought associated with the phenomenon.

Questionnaire Construction

The closed/forced choice questionnaire has been used in this project. Demographic characteristics such as age, marital status, previous education, and annual income were included in the survey so the researcher can determine who is returning to adult education and why. Personal characteristics differ among women who need to learn and those who want to learn (Aslanian, 1980).

It is necessary to know where women are taking classes and how the sponsoring institution has aided them because women have special needs that must be addressed if they are to meet all demands put on them in a changing world. This will aid these institutions in long range planning for the nontraditional students (Lewis, 1988).

Surveys were pretested by 25 women that are on the staff where this researcher works to be sure all instructions on the cover letter were clearly stated so the respondents would know the purpose of the study and understand how to proceed through it. Another purpose of the pretest was to be sure all questions were related exactly to the research problem and objectives so the data would be clear for interpretation. It was necessary to check that questions were not threatening or biased. The women participating in the pretest have various backgrounds. They work in the capacity of custodians, secretaries, food service personnel, bus drivers, school teachers, and administrators.

Modifications were made in the cover letter by adding clarification of what the researcher considers to be courses or classes, so the respondents more clearly understood what information the researcher was seeking. In the area of reasons for returning to learning, the statement referring to changes of life situation was more fully explained and the category "improvement of skills" was added because in today's fast-changing

technology, skills one must know are also changing and women must improve their skills to remain competitive.

Variables

Age. The age of the woman participating in adult education will have a bearing on the results of this study. As stated in the literature review, women at various stages of their life are more likely to choose to participate in adult education.

Level of Education. The level of education varies with one's background. In most cases if a mother is committed to a good educational background, her offspring will be, too. One's background determines how much education one will strive for. Those who are better educated seek more learning, thus this may be a reason for their participation.

Annual Income. Persons who value education seem to come from a group who have a higher annual income. Those who earn less annually tend to shun education for various reasons, such as, lack of funds for tuition, lack of time and lack of interest in improving life style.

Marital Status. The marital status of a woman may dictate whether she can or can not participate in adult education. The single mother is hampered by problems of child care. Some women with families feel they don't have time to formally learn while raising a family. On the other side of the coin, the divorced, widowed or single woman may seek educational experiences to meet and associate with people of both sexes, as well as find the need for updating her abilities to secure a job that will help her retain her lifestyle.

Reasons For Reentry to Adult Education. This may vary due to educational background, age, marital status and the place where the class is held. The type of class material to be presented can also be a reason for the return of an adult woman.

Places of Learning or Education. The more convenient the location of the class, the more likely some women will be to enroll in a class or course. More senior women tend to look for educational opportunities that are presented in areas that they are familiar

with, rather than traveling miles into unfamiliar areas. Courses offered at a work place often are successful because one does not need to travel far to attend.

Aid From Sponsoring Organizations. If the organization sponsoring or presenting the class is concerned about the adult woman, she is more likely to participate in the learning process. Women reentering academia often need counseling, flexible schedules, financial aid and different types of instruction.

All of the above variables will be considered in this research when analyzing information. The dependent variables will be the motivation for continuing adult education. The women who is motivated by family, acquaintances, employers or her own self esteem will be more likely to look for life-long learning opportunities.

Data Analysis

The variables were accurately used and the environment was not controlled. Since this is a casual/comparative study, one must not assume that independent variables do or do not cause outcomes reflected in the dependent variables. The data indicated relationships and gave clues to probable causes.

Since this is a cross-sectional design, data was being sampled at a single point in time to measure the performance of women from different age groups and backgrounds. The surveys have been distributed to women in various vocations. 150 surveys were distributed and returned for analysis.

The information from the surveys was put into a computer. Using a LOTUS spreadsheet, the data was tallied by categories, such as age, level of education, participant's annual salary and location of learning situations. It was analyzed to determine what age women are most likely to become involved in educational pursuits.

Data was tested to see if there is a correlation between age, location of classes offered, educational background and the reasons for showing an interest in life-long learning.

Women surveyed were asked to indicate ways learning institutions helped in

furthering their education. After analyzing this information, ideas surfaced to help women who are thinking about future re-entry into the field of adult education.

Data was also studied to discover how women have personally realized benefits from adult education.

Chapter IV

INTERPRETATION OF DATA

This study was conducted in the Phoenix area Valley of the Sun and surveyed homemakers, women employed in various types of careers or retired women. Since the respondents were not randomly selected, the number of women surveyed in each age category was not equal, as shown in Table 1.

Survey Results

Surveys were distributed to women who lived in the researcher's neighborhood, worked at a local hospital, were employed in the accounting department of a local bank, and a business office. Women also were surveyed at a senior center, a church, and the researcher's place of employment. It was learned that 82.7% of the respondents had participated in some form of adult education after their formal education. Table 2 indicates the percentage of women who have taken classes or courses by age group. Women who are 36-55 seem to be more interested in pursuing continuing education than those in other age categories. As the literature states, at this point in life, women have more time, opportunity, and money. They also are still in a position to improve employment opportunities. These women fall into the group that has been extremely interested in environmental issues, improved health, and have frequently been a partner in a dual income family.

When analyzing the annual salary of the group of women surveyed, the largest number of participants seemed to be on the lower end of the earning scale, with incomes of less than \$15,000. The youngest and oldest age groups fell into this category, perhaps because they are working at entry level jobs or they are living on social security or public assistance. Thirty-one percent of the number of respondents in these age groups have taken adult classes.

Table 1.
RESPONDENTS TO SURVEY
BY AGE

AGE GROUP	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS
18-25	21
26-35	39
36-45	29
46-55	19
56-65	17
OVER 65	25
TOTAL	150

Table 2.
PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN
WHO HAVE PARTICIPATED
IN ADULT EDUCATION

AGE GROUP	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS BY AGE GROUP
18-25	14.0	66.6
26-35	26.0	79.5
36-45	19.0	93.1
46-55	13.0	100.0
56-65	11.0	88.2
OVER 65	17.0	72.0

Thirty-six percent of the women surveyed earn \$25,000-\$45,000 annually. Of this number 57% are in the age range of 36-55, the largest number of women who are involved in continuing education as presented in one of the preceding paragraphs. This information agrees with findings presented in the literature review in chapter two. Women who have higher levels of income tend to seek additional learning. More than one-third of the participants in the survey are college graduates with a bachelor's or master's degree. Almost another one-third has had either some college or vocational training after high school completion. Only 13 of the 150 women did not graduate from high school. This bears out the fact that society is placing increased emphasis on having a well educated female populace since the turn of the century (Watson, 1989). Only 5.3% of the youngest women surveyed were high school dropouts. A small number of minorities were included in this survey, so it is possible that this figure could escalate if another sampling were taken in a different population.

Women involve themselves in adult education for various reasons, as can be seen on Table 3. When a woman marries, she might be interested in improving homemaking skills, such as cooking, sewing, household budgeting or interior decoration. If she lost a spouse either by death, separation, or divorce, it may be necessary to learn about single parenting, money management, survival as a single person or stress management. In the Phoenix area it is possible to contact the Displaced Homemaker's Center for New Directions which conducts free re-entry classes for women who have been forced to leave a career as a homemaker to enter the job market.

Becoming pregnant is one of life's changes that can inspire women to seek classes offered by health organizations in the valley for the purpose of learning about pre-natal care and the joys of motherhood.

With America's society becoming more mobile, a woman may enroll in classes to learn a foreign language, to learn about the locale where she will be residing or just to

Table 3.
REASONS FOR WOMEN PARTICIPATING
IN ADULT EDUCATION

REASONS	PERCENTAGE BY AGE					
	18-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	OVER 65
Change of Life Situation	14.2	7.6	20.6	21.0	0	0
To Learn Basic Skills	14.2	0	6.9	5.2	17.6	16.0
Career Improvement	33.3	51.2	69.0	63.2	47.1	32.0
Leisure Time Activity	0	15.4	44.8	36.8	52.9	32.0
Improvement of Skills	9.5	43.6	37.9	52.6	29.4	8.0
To Earn Advanced Degree	19.0	17.9	24.1	21.1	5.9	4.0
Other	9.5	0	10.3	10.5	0	12.0

****The percentages may total more than 100 because respondents gave multiple reasons.**

meet new people in meaningful situations. Taking adult classes not only improves one's intellect, it provides social contacts that are of value.

Loss of a job in today's world can be devastating to a woman, therefore she may opt to return to classes for retraining in a field where she can find employment or meet with others who are in the same situation. Often this exposes her to networking that may eventually help her find employment.

As shown on Table 3, the largest percentage of the women in this study are returning to schooling for career improvement in all age categories. Even women over 65 have taken courses for career improvement during their working years.

Many employers are offering employees classes for improving their work skills as jobs become more technical. Perhaps women see the importance for the updating of skills and are taking advantage of these opportunities offered at their workplaces as evidenced by the observation that the largest number of surveyed participants between the ages of 26 and 55 are or have been involved in programs that may keep them current with modern technology.

With illiteracy at an all time high in this country, a small percentage of women who need education in basic skills, such as reading and writing, are going back to class so they can compete in the work world.

As seen on Table 3, 28% of women over the age of 35 are participating in adult education to make leisure time more fulfilling. This type of learning might consist of bridge classes, tennis or golf lessons, bible study, classes offered to become a volunteer at a worthwhile organization or classes that deal with The Arts, whether for participation or appreciation.

Women between 36 and 45 seem to be more interested in earning an advanced degree. This information agrees with the statement in the literature review that women return to the classroom after their families are grown.

Women are attending colleges and universities in great numbers (see Table 4). These institutions are the choice of 52.7% of the survey respondents, perhaps because they find courses for career improvement at these institutions of higher learning.

Table 4 shows that 18.7% of the women surveyed are or have been taking classes offered at their place of employment. Often this proves to be most convenient for then a woman doesn't have to travel to another location and many times these classes are offered on company time.

Only 1.3% of the respondents have taken adult education classes in public school settings because not enough communities have become involved in community education. Using these buildings for adult learning can be an economically sound way of encouraging lifelong learning.

Organizations and institutions must make women aware of what they offer to the non-traditional student. Not all returning women have a need for help in re-entry, but this research shows that for some it is of great importance.

Flexible scheduling is of utmost concern to women between the ages of 26 and 45, as shown on Table 5. Of the respondents, 25.3% felt they would not have been able to take classes if class scheduling followed the traditional format, because of other obligations, such as work and filling family needs. Evening and weekend classed worked well for these women.

Financial aid and counselling are often needed by the re-entry woman. The woman may have been removed from the educational world for some years, therefore she may need current information to make the transition to student more comfortable and less stressful. Fourteen percent of the women surveyed appreciated an advisor's help on their return to learning situations, not only when getting started, but as they progressed through their classes (see Table 5). This counselor was probably the only person who she could discuss educational problems with intelligently.

Table 4.
LOCATIONS FOR ADULT LEARNING
FOR WOMEN

(Where classes were taken)

LOCATION	AGE GROUPS						PERCENTAGE
	18-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	OVER 65	OF GROUP
Place of Employment	2	11	3	4	6	2	18.7
Community College	0	2	2	2	0	0	4.0
College or University	9	22	19	11	9	9	52.7
Church/ Religious Institution	0	0	2	4	1	2	6.0
Community/ Recreation Center	1	5	10	2	4	4	17.3
Public School (Continuing Education)	2	0	0	0	0	0	1.3
Other	1	4	4	4	2	3	12.0

**The percentages total more than 100 because of multiple responses.

The cost of continuing education is rising every year. Often the re-entry woman doesn't have financial resources to cover the cost of books and tuition. She may not know how to go about applying for loans or grants. Fourteen percent of the respondents to this survey said the educational institution aided them in securing financial aid so they could pursue adult learning (see Table 5).

Only 3.3% of the women who were surveyed felt they had help with child care problems. These were in the 18-35 age group. It is possible that many women didn't need child care services, because the larger percentage of women who were re-entering education were of an age group where their families no longer needed these services. Perhaps more women could return to school if child care would be offered by more institutions.

Courses and classes that have been of interest to women are as varied as the ages of those who are taking them. Table 6 lists those classes most frequently mentioned by those surveyed. Many deal with career improvement, such as, education courses, accounting, nursing and computers. This list of preferred classes reinforces formerly stated information dealing with reasons for re-entry.

Leisure time classes rate high not only for retired women, but also for those younger women who are interested in learning about subjects that will improve their life style now and in the future. Aerobics, religious study, the arts--music and art, diet classes, golf and tennis classes and photography might fall into this category.

Change of life situations can encourage women to take pre-natal and parenting classes, cooking and sewing in an effort to make life more pleasant.

Each woman surveyed had her own reasons for selecting the courses or classes of her choice. One senior citizen this researcher talked with said she had always wanted to take classes in tap dancing. She had to wait until retirement to fulfill her fantasy. Now she performs in shows presented at local senior centers. She plans to dance as long as her

Table 5.
USE OF AID OFFERED BY
SPONSORING ORGANIZATIONS

TYPE OF AID	AGE GROUPS						PERCENTAGE
	18-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	OVER 65	OF GROUP
Councelling	3	4	2	8	4	0	14.0
Child Care	2	3	0	0	0	0	3.3
Financial Aid	4	8	4	4	1	0	14.0
Flexible Scheduling	4	18	12	2	1	1	25.3
Other	0	0	1	1	0	2	3.0

****The percentages do not equal 100 because not all respondents used aid.**

Table 6.
CLASSES TAKEN BY WOMEN

Number of Participants

* Computers	28	* Mathematics	6
* Education	20	* Pre-Natal	6
Classes		* Parenting	6
* Aerobics	17	* Psychology	6
* Art	17	* Golf	5
* Business	12	* Cooking	5
Classes		* Diet Classes	5
* Nursing	10	* Photography	4
* Foreign	8	* Cosmetology	4
Languages		* Basic Reading	4
* Stress	8	and Writing	
Management		* Bridge	3
* Music	8	* History	3
* Religious	8	* Life Change	3
Study			
* Money	7	Other classes	
Management		mentioned were:	
* Tennis	7	Public Speaking	
* English	7	Aging	
		Sewing	
		Design	
		Real Estate	

body allows.

Women who participated in adult education found rewards in personal benefits from taking adult education classes. Of the surveyed group, 49.3% felt they experienced a raise in their self-esteem (see Table 7). Women need this lift because in the United States there still is discrimination against the female. With increased self-esteem, women feel better about their abilities when meeting others in the work place or on a social basis.

Of the respondents to the survey, 37.3% chose to take classes and courses for both improved salary and to improve their life style. In some professions, such as teaching, a person is paid additional salary for taking professional growth classes. Other jobs, too, offer monetary incentives for taking advanced classes. Women who want to improve their economic standard of living are taking classes. Everyone is looking for improved life style. Women no longer are content to take what is handed to them, they are becoming the aggressor and will continue now that they see what education can do for them.

It is interesting to note that 38.7% of those surveyed were seeking other benefits from continued learning. Some reasons were "just for fun, to keep my mind active, to learn to set up my own business, to get a better job, to keep from being bored, and as an encouragement to take additional classwork."

Interpretation

Women between the age of 36-55 have taken more adult education classes than those in other age groups.

Those between the ages of 18-25 and over 65 are not looking for career improvement at this time, whereas women considered middle age 36-55 are interested in progressing in employment. Earning an advanced degree is more important to women in this 36-55 age group than others. As women pass the age of intense family responsibility, they look for

Table 7.
BENEFITS WOMEN RECEIVED FROM
TAKING ADULT EDUCATION

AGE GROUP	BENEFITS				
	Encouraged to take additional classes	Improved salary	Self Esteem	Improved Life Style	Other
18-25	3	6	11	10	1
26-35	9	11	22	9	6
36-45	9	14	15	12	5
46-55	4	12	11	7	6
56-65	7	4	10	8	1
over 65	2	9	5	10	5
TOTAL	34	56	74	56	24
Percentage of group	22.7	37.3	49.3	37.3	16.0

**The percentages total more than 100 because respondents gave multiple responses.

leisure time activities, as evidenced by the larger number of women participating after the age of 35. *Flexibility women have a head start in the area of non-traditional education*

With employers offering training classes, women between 25 and 35 are taking courses at work sites. Local community or recreation centers have attracted 17.3% of the women surveyed to the classes they offer.

Flexible scheduling is most important to women who re-enter adult education. Counselling and financial aid, as seen by the fact that 14% of the respondents had made use of these offerings, is also important to the returnee.

A relationship can be seen between the classes taken and the age of participants. Women between 36 and 55 are interested in improving their careers and earning advanced degrees, therefore we can see that courses in computers, education, accounting and business head the list of those classes most frequently taken. Classes that deal with improving personal living, such as music, religion, sports, diet and bridge were of interest, too.

The women surveyed in this study preferred colleges and universities for their continuing education. Perhaps the reason for this preference was the chosen courses were primarily offered at institutions of higher learning.

Women who are seeking help for continuing education want flexible schedules, counselling and financial aid. Colleges and universities are the institutions that can offer these services. Child care was not important to most of the respondents.

Self-esteem has been raised in almost half of the women who took continuing education courses. In addition to perceiving themselves having a better life, more than one-third of those surveyed were seeking improved salary which in turn can fulfill their desire for improved life style. Other benefits that women gained are in line with the idea of life-long learning, such as "keeping the mind active, just for fun and to keep from being bored."

If the results of this research is an indication of women's desires to improve their station in life, Phoenix women have a head start in the area of non-traditional education for life-long learning.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

The nineteenth century model of education is no longer functional for women in the world of accelerating change. The changing role of women, the longer life spans of women and increased leisure time for women demands that education be defined as a life-long process of continuing inquiry.

With the growth of the number of women in the work force, adult education is a necessity if one is to improve one's career. Women are still often overlooked when an employer funds the cost of education for employees. More monies seem to be channeled into programs for executives and managers (most of whom are still men) than to clerical personnel. Women needing financial aid often must fund their education with loans on their own. Though the process has been slow, some employers are organizing classes for employees who need training in basic skills or retraining to keep current with new technologies.

As seen in the previous chapter, women are seeking higher levels of education. Their choice overwhelmingly is in the area of subjects that will improve their standard of living and self-esteem. If women have successful learning experiences, they may feel education is important. To encourage continued participation a woman needs support from family, friends, institutions and employers. Those who are poorly educated have had less pleasant experiences in school and associated with others who feel the same, thus they have little interest in seeking learning as an adult. They even shy away from classes for leisure time activities.

As the income level of women rises, so does the interest in enrolling in classes or courses for improvement of salary, life style and leisure-time activity. Classes taken by

younger females in lower income brackets often tend to deal with basics for day-to-day living. Many of these women are not aware of opportunities that exist. They don't know what educational programs can do to enhance their lives. Institutions and organizations need to publicize what they have to offer for adults by using mass media more and by doing public relations advertising in community agencies, such as welfare offices and churches. State intervention is probably essential for social equity.

State and federal organizations must make funds available for classes to help lower income women develop their earning potential in an effort to make them citizens who will make worthwhile contributions to society. The cost of adult education could be reduced through vouchers or employer or individual incentives. If these young women can learn to value education and become a positive role model for their children, perhaps their offspring will follow suit, thus reducing illiteracy.

A more mobile society that exists in the world today, the rise in number of single parent families and career opportunities for women are reasons for women re-entering adult education. Technology has afforded women more leisure time. Women are looking for challenges to fill their free time. Learning has proved to be the tool that many are using to remain active--both physically and mentally.

As can be seen by the results of the survey, learning is being accomplished in places other than the traditional classroom. Often the adult woman learner will seek out advanced education or learning when the class is held at a location that is convenient to home or work. Perhaps the use of more public buildings, such as schools, would encourage more women to participate.

This research was limited to a small population in an Arizona metropolitan area, therefore it cannot be generalized to all women in the United States. It bears out conclusions reached by the U. S. Bureau of Census (Cross, 1984) that women in The West are ahead of other regions in the country in the area of adult education.

With the increasing trend of women seeking careers in higher management positions and professions, the change of the U. S. society from an industrial one to one that is service oriented and the increasing need for independence of women, researchers need additional studies to determine whether women will continue to make adult learning a life-long goal.

Recommendations

Women will be a growing market for non-traditional education in the future. They will be looking for new careers, opportunities to upgrade their careers, opportunities to upgrade their skills, better life styles and improvements in life style, as well as worthwhile activities to occupy their mind and body.

Communities and institutions must be prepared to meet the needs of women. They can do so by:

- * Providing guidance and counseling that encourage women to seek non-traditional adult education;
- * Creating programs that attract women into non-traditional areas of education;
- * Helping to overcome attitudinal barriers to women's entry into non-traditional education;
- * Encouraging training that will be useful in emerging high-technology fields;
- * Developing programs that target displaced homemakers for education;
- * Constructing flexible schedules and choosing convenient locations for women students who must meet family responsibilities while taking courses;
- * Making locations more convenient for senior women;
- * Supporting legislative, programmatic and monetary initiatives with the goal of educational equality for women.

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APPENDIX

Cover Letter and Survey

Spring, 1991

Dear Participant:

Attached you will find a questionnaire about women and how and why they are returning to education. I would appreciate your assistance in my research data collection. Please complete the questionnaire by checking the appropriate answer or answers. Try to reply as factually as you can. All information in this survey will be kept confidential.

Please be aware that adult education is a systematic and purposeful effort by adults to increase knowledge and provide educational experiences beyond required schooling (formal education). Classes or courses can be anything from those you took in a formal school situation to those you might have taken in a more informal atmosphere, such as, sports, handicrafts, cooking, parenting, or anything you learned just for your own pleasure.

Thank you for your cooperation in completing this questionnaire.

Sincerely,

Betty J. Squires

ADULT EDUCATION/WOMEN

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What is your age?

___ 18 - 25 ___ 36 - 45 ___ 56 - 65

___ 26 - 35 ___ 46 - 55 ___ Over 65

2. What is your highest level of education?

___ Less than high school graduation

___ High school graduation

___ GED

___ Some college

___ Bachelor's Degree

___ Master's Degree

___ Doctorate

3. What is your annual salary?

___ Less than \$15,000 ___ \$35,000 - \$45,000

___ \$15,000 - \$25,000 ___ \$45,000 - \$55,000

___ \$25,000 - \$35,000 ___ Over \$55,000

4. What is your marital status?

___ Single ___ Divorced

___ Married ___ Widowed

5. Have you taken any classes or courses since you completed your formal education (required schooling)?

____ Yes ____ No

6. Why did you take these classes or courses?

____ Change of life situation (marriage, death of spouse, divorce, pregnancy, moved to a new location, loss of job, etc.)

____ To learn basic skills

____ Career improvement

____ Leisure time activity

____ Improvement of Skills

____ To earn an advanced degree

____ Other (please explain) _____

7. Please list classes or courses you have taken.

8. Where did you take these classes or courses? (check all that apply)

____ Place of employment

____ Community College

____ College or University

____ Community or recreation center

____ Public school continuing education location

____ Church

____ Other _____

9. How has the sponsoring organization or institution helped you in your re-entry into adult education? (check all that apply)

____ Counseling ____ Financial Aid

____ Child care facilities ____ Flexible schedules

____ Other _____

10. What personal benefits have you received by taking these classes or courses? (check all that apply).

____ Encouragement to take additional classwork

____ Improved salary

____ Higher self-esteem

____ Improved lifestyle

____ Other _____

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Betty Squires was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin on December 22, 1933. She received elementary and secondary education in the West Milwaukee School System.

In June, 1955, she earned a Bachelor of Science degree in elementary education from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. By taking additional courses, she became certified as a school librarian. She has taught in grades two, three and five and has been a school librarian in elementary, middle and secondary schools.

After moving to Arizona in 1986, she enrolled in the graduate program at Ottawa University in September, 1989 and received a Master of Arts Degree in Human Resources in 1991.

At the present time, Betty is a librarian at Sandpiper School in the Paradise Valley Unified School District in Phoenix, Arizona.

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