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Exploration of Women in the Adult Classroom

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Topic Overview

- There are differences in how women learn in adult education versus men and this is an issue that affects the United States as well as the rest of the world. Most traditional courses do not differentiate for gender and it is an everyone takes the class in the same way model.



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- There has been much research done on this topic and one such resource is an article composed by Donnalee Rubin that investigated this topic. Per Rubin (1993), “teachers are more likely to overcome the influence of gender bias on their teaching if they adopt a process-based method and work intimately with their students through nondirective, supportive conferences” (p. xii).



Synopsis of Presentation

- The purpose of this presentation is to look into how females learn in the adult classroom as it relates to contemporary practices that are currently utilized in higher education as well as how women interact and fit in within the adult learning theories such as andragogy.
 - Also, how being female impacts adult cognitive development and teaching methods that may enhance women's learning will be explored.
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A Bit of Exploration...



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- Ostrouch-Kamińska and Vieira wrote an article focused on critical perspectives toward gender sensitive adult education.
- Per Ostrouch-Kamińska and Vieira (2016), “The experiences related to gender influence the way knowledge is acquired, the expectations people make about themselves, the choices of learning subjects and their self-confidence in learning” (p. 1).



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- The authors let us know that gender is a social construct that influences our lives and educational institutions organizations, especially the institutions that are focusing on adult learning.
- The authors concluded their article by saying that gender is needed to be taken into consideration in adult education as women learn on a different level than men. Education needs to be a center point in society and should not exclude women within adult education

Affect is worldwide!!!



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- *An example of this was found in *Gender Related Obstacles in Higher Education* that was written by Jelena Đermanov, Marijana Kosanović, and Jelena Vukičević in 2016.*
- The article talks about the negative obstacles that females face while attending school and that make it harder for them to obtain their degrees.



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- Their research was conducted at University of Novi Sad with 150 females that were in the schools of social science and humanities. Đermanov, Kosanović, and Vukičević (2016) discuss that gender-sensitive education consists of, “the creation of conditions for the maximal development of each individual student, providing equal opportunities and critical examination of existing discriminatory patterns” (p. 133).



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- Their research confirmed that gender discrimination in the academic world does exist but there are two types of social factors, one that encourages gender inequality and one that encourages gender equality. The overall goal is to give students an educational environment while using methods and materials that are sensitive to an individual's sensitivities and characteristics.

Contemporary Practices for Teaching Adult Learners



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- ▶ Per Taylor and Cranton (2012), “adult education scholars have forgone special attention to a woman; this depoliticization means that women’s needs and causes are increasingly hidden” (p. 246). Women as a whole are being forced into the background as aspects of things such as race and disability are being focused upon.



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- ▶ Women's transformational learning is a central concern that leads many learners to not have exposure to the insights that women have in social sciences. Women were at one time not even allowed to attend adult education courses. Since the 1990s women have outnumbered men in adult education. Even though this is the case there is still discrimination done by teachers towards females.



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- The most common practices that teachers still do in the classroom according to Deandra Little in her book that was published in 2004 called *Teaching a Diverse Student Body: Practical Strategies for Enhancing Our Students' Learning* include the following. Teachers will call upon male students even when a female raises their hand or if no one raises their hand, waiting longer for males than females to respond to questions that the teacher poses and give male students a higher level of eye contact that invites the male to respond.

- Also, teachers give males more time and specific feedback on their works and give them more ideas to improve their work by giving them specific steps on how to complete the projects



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- In the past decades there has been much discussion concerning how women outperform males academically. There have been many parents and teachers that view this as a concern and research has been conducted for this area via books such as *The Trouble with Boys* (Tyre, 2008).



<https://pixabay.com/photos/apple-red-red-apple-hand-2788613/>

- ▶ Per Jacobs C., Kuriloff. P., Andrus, S., and Cox, A (2018), “so far, no one has asked the same question about girls” (para. 3). Jacobs et al. then conducted a study that covered women in education. Per Jacobs et al., “if we want to reach girls, we must align teaching practices with their specific needs. We found that lessons with hands-on learning, elements of creativity, multimodal projects, and class discussions all worked to stimulate girls’ interest in the classroom” (para. 25).

Overcoming Gender Bias



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- An example of how gender bias was overcome currently exists at a local university in Indiana. The English Composition area modified one of their introductory composition courses to make it more gender neutral by teaching using a recitation method along with group conferences with students. This area also brought the use of technology into the classroom by providing computers for students to utilize during their conferences to work on papers together.



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- Teachers are responsible to create an inclusive classroom environment that all students can reflect upon and thus be able to learn from. This will allow the woman learner to sort out their feelings and help them change their viewpoint that they cannot compete with their male peers. Per Galbraith (2004), “understanding the integrated aspects of your own distinct learning style dimension become the initial step in a process that becomes a metacognitive tool in the teacher’s hands” (p. 133).

Adult Learning Theories and Models



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Behavioral Learning Theory

- ▶ According to Reiser and Dempsey (2012), “behavioral learning theory is empirically based, which meant that behavior observed both before and after an intervention such as instruction has been implemented” (p. 36). The student comes into a lesson with a clean slate that can be influenced by both positive and negative reinforcements. Keramida (2017) mentions four behavioral techniques that are part of learning objectives, “discrimination, generalization, association, and chaining” (para. 8-11).

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- ▶ The use of behaviorism may lead to the detriment of women in higher education as the standardized test for example is something that women historically score lower in than their male counterparts. Per Hacker (2016), “Standardized testing in math, where women do significantly worse than men, is setting women back before they even begin college” (para. 2). Mathematics is an area of study that discourages women and thus they don’t measure up to males in their test score results.

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- ▶ Per Hacker (2016), “We know that the problem is the test. It’s not the students, because girls and women are getting better grades than boys and men in high-school and college mathematics courses” (para. 2). Hacker also mentions that if we do not change our methods of testing ability there is not much chance that the gender imbalance in areas such as science and engineers will ever improve.



Andragogy

- ▶ According to Merriam and Bierema, (2014), andragogy is strongly related to humanism as “the individual is central, internally motivated and self-directed, and engages in learning for self-fulfillment, problem solving, and greater competency in life roles” (p. 56). Andragogy is for adult learners and in 1980 and 1984 Knowles explained that andragogy was comprised of six assumptions.



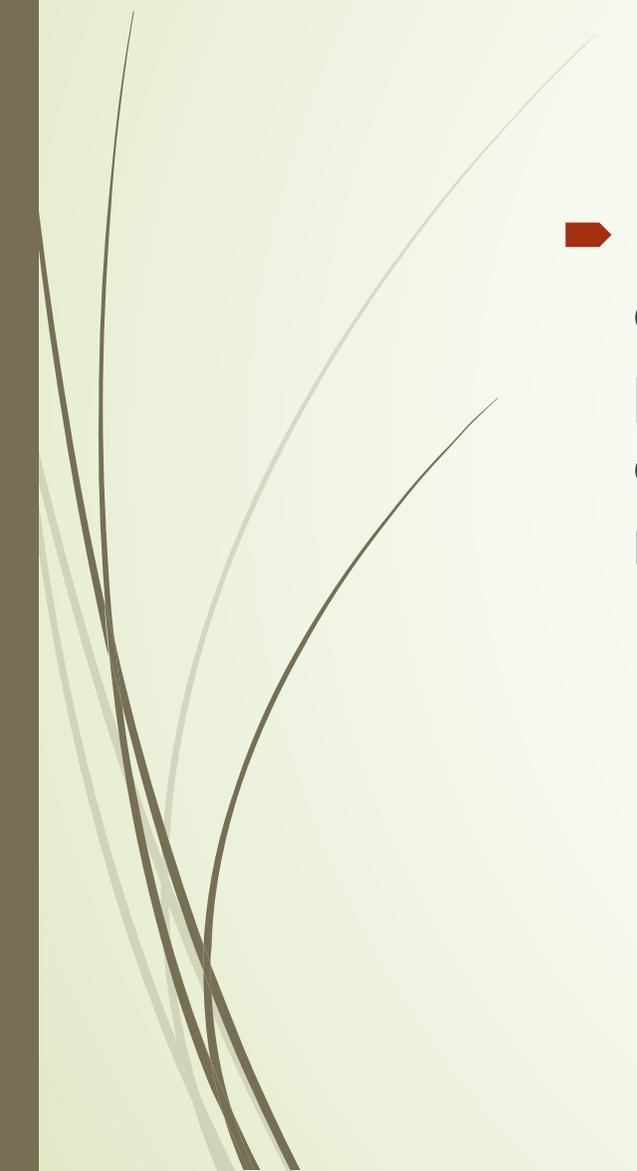
Andragogy



- ▶ The first assumption says that as a person matures their self-concept moves from being dependent in nature to that of self-directing.
- ▶ The second assumption says that an adult has a reservoir of past experiences that can be used as a resource in their adult learning.
- ▶ The third assumption is that an adult's readiness is related to the developmental task that are in their social role.

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- The fourth assumption discusses time and the perspective of it as people mature. Primarily as how people are able to use knowledge in the future or immediately. Adults are more centered around problems in learning than being focused on the subject.
 - The fifth talks about how an adult is mostly guided by motivation that is internal instead of motivations that are outward.
 - The sixth assumption is that there is a need to know the reason why an adult is learning.

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- ▶ A study conducted by Burcue Varol and Sinem Yilmaz in 2010 compared the similarities and differences that exist between female and male learners while they are participating in autonomous language learning activities. Varol and Yilmaz (2010) let us know that “although traditionally females and males are assumed to have different abilities regarding language, language learning, and different analytical and mathematical skills” (p.238).

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- ▶ However, when you review the conclusion that Varol and Yilmaz (2010) make you will see that the female participants showed more characteristics that favoring andragogy than male students regarding intrinsic motivation and self-directed learning.



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- “As regards the differences between the girls and boys in their preferences for autonomous activities, the females seemed to take more opportunities, especially in trying new things in class activities, studying grammar on their own, doing non-compulsory assignments, and noting down new words and their meanings. Therefore, the girls seemed to behave more autonomously in and out of the class.” (p. 242)
- This means that females may be more individualistic and thus per Varol and Yilmaz (2010), “were more involved in decision making process related to learning than the boys” (p. 242).

Conclusions about Learning Theories



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- Thus, behaviorism is not a theory that promotes women's success in higher education. However, andragogy is a contemporary learning theory that women may better appreciate in the adult education classroom. Per Akkoyunlu and Soylu (2008), "the use of learning style diversity, when understood, can translate into appropriate learning environments, which will enable learners to achieve success" (p. 191).



<https://pixabay.com/photos/model-woman-young-model-fashion-2339867/>

- Teachers are responsible to create points that women students can reflect upon. This will allow the learner to sort out their feelings and help them change their viewpoint. Usually a problem or task will be given to the students by the professor and the students are then able to decide how they will be able to resolve the problem.

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- ▶ Teachers are also needing to be a mentor to their students as this is an essential part of transformational learning and it is per Taylor and Cranton (2012), “especially important for women and even more for women in crisis” (p. 251).



<https://pixabay.com/photos/learn-student-laptop-internet-3653430/>



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