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To correspond with New Horizons in Adult Education send email to horizons@nova.edu or send postal mail to the following:

New Horizons in Adult Education

Nova Southeastern University

Department of Higher Education Leadership

1750 N.E. 167th Street

North Miami Beach, FL 33162-3017

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NEW HORIZONS IN ADULT EDUCATION
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EDITOR'S PREFACE

In her article **Reclaiming Our Social Justice Roots: How Links Between Spirituality and Adult Education Can Help Us** Janet Groen considers the vision of well-known social justice adult educators of the past, as well as results of recent qualitative research studies. Her convincing article presents a powerful discussion of the need to reclaim our social justice roots by connecting adult education practices to a lived spirituality. This powerful article brings together our history with the need to apply social justice principles to our current practices today.

A project of the Ohio Literacy Resource Center at Kent State University provided the basis for the article by Joanne Kilgour Dowdy and Sandra Golden, **GED Scholars Initiative at Kent State University, "Inspiring the Inspired."** Their study focused on female students at Kent State University who had completed their GED. The results of their study led to several valuable activities designed to enhance their program: a peer mentor group, computer lab and technology workshops, and a shadowing program for GED graduates in the community. The findings in their study are applicable to many similar adult education programs.

Lois Zachary, whose own book **The Mentor's Guide: Facilitating Effective Learning Relationships**, has provided a valuable tool for understanding the role of mentoring in adult education today, has presented a thoughtful review of the recent book **From Teaching to Mentoring: Principle and Practice, Dialogue and Life in Adult Education** by Lee Herman and Alan Mandell. Zachary describes how Herman and Mandell have shared dialogue of actual mentoring relationships to illustrate the process. Their experiences and critical reflections emphasize the value of mentoring throughout adult education practices. I especially appreciate this valuable book by my colleagues at SUNY Empire State College, Herman and Mandell, where we as faculty are called mentors and where the process of mentoring is the center of ongoing discussion and discovery.

Readers are invited to make these articles "interactive" by responding on AEDNET (the Adult Education NETWORK) and sharing their comments. (Directions to guide this discussion are given in this issue on page 40). Readers also are encouraged to submit an article for consideration by the editorial board of New Horizons on a related topic or other topic relevant to adult education philosophy, research, and practice. (See Call for Manuscripts on page 40 for details.)

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Reclaiming Our Social Justice Roots: How Links Between Spirituality and Adult Education Can Help Us

Janet Groen
University of Calgary

Abstract

This paper explores the spiritual roots of such social justice educators as Freire (1970), Yeaxlee (1925), and Coady (1939) and examines the common social justice strand within recent qualitative research studies (English, 2001; Groen, 2002; & Tisdell, 2000) that focus on adult educators and spirituality. This historical exploration and review of these qualitative research studies will serve as the basis for a discussion of how we can re-awaken and reclaim our social justice roots by focusing on a spirituality that is engaged within the world.

Voices From the Past

Myles Horton

As a high school kid, I was active in the church. I was head of the youth group in the church at the time and an active church worker, but I was beginning to get very critical ...I was the head of a regional religious youth group, and I was presiding over a meeting. I got up at the introduction and said we've got a lot of work to do because we've got to talk about religion six days a week instead of one day. (Myles Horton as cited in Bell, Gaventa, & Peters, 1990, p. 29)

Paulo Friere

One of the new things I found is that the Christian people come to the churches in order to know better about their situation in relation to their faith.... They began also to have their study circles, studying discussing the Gospels, and thinking about the political and social circumstances in which they were reinterpreting the Gospels. In doing that, they discovered the need to change the country, and they got a new consciousness – a historical, political consciousness of the reality. At the same time they taught the priests how to rethink the whole thing of politics and social movements and so on. (Paulo Freire as cited in Bell, Gaventa, & Peters, 1990, p. 210-211)

Father Moses Coady

If he is truly religious, he ought to recognize at once what is fundamentally good and recognition ought to mean immediate adoption. ... He must lend a willing hand to tighten the restraining bonds on capitalism until it has relearned, from the good example of cooperation, its forgotten slogan that honesty is the best policy

and that forgotten virtues of justice and charity are essential to social and economic welfare. The religious leader cannot compromise on the economic question. (Father Moses Coady, 1939, p. 144)

Eduard Lindeman

In what areas do most people appear to find life's meaning? We have only one pragmatic guide: meaning must reside in the things for which people strive, the goals which they set for themselves, their wants, needs, desires and wishes ...briefly they want to improve themselves ... but they also want to change the social order. (Eduard Lindeman, 1961, p. 275)

Voices from the Present

The women I interviewed embody a spirituality that is characterized by a thirst for justice, for equitable economic and social order. The interviews yielded rich detail about how the adult educators saw their work contributing to the common good. (English, 2001, p.)

It is the reason really I am here, on a spiritual plane, but on a real plane, I have no alternative. There is really no alternative to doing this work because of the devastation; I mean what else do you do? It is my responsibility, my duty, my reason, my history, my spirit, my soul. (participant, Tisdell, 2000, p. 325)

This catches me by surprise because one of my pictures of spirituality is that it's a quiet, meditating, peaceful place. I suppose I have two poles around spirituality, one is that and I certainly need that replenishment for my own serenity and peace but then the other pole is this outreach, this proactive attempting to make the world a better place. (participant, Groen, 2002, p. 97)

When Mick talked about supporting the individual and the group it was within the context of protecting the social qualities of the business against the expectation of profit "at all costs". "They need to trust each other; they need to help each other because there are so many forces working against them right in the business". As Mick persisted in this work, he reflected that his spiritual grounding "sets a foundation for you and you always come back to that mind set. (participant, Groen, 2002, p. 100)

Introduction

Recently, I completed a qualitative research study (Groen, 2002) that explored how adult educators connect their spirituality to their work within their various organizations. Before I began to interview my participants, I speculated that they would make connections to their spirituality by exploring the learning situations that they designed and led. While that emerged as part of their reflection, all of the participants consistently broadened the concept of their spirituality as adult educators by focusing on the need to support people within their workplace

settings. Frequently this meant that they moved against the tide of their workplace or the larger community as they assumed the role of social advocate. “There are times when it seems overwhelming, when the tension seems too much. I’m exhausted. When the business imperative and the analytical brain seems to overtake me, but who else will stand in that spot and hold the tension that says no I won’t go away?” (participant, Groen, 2002, p. 103). In this social advocacy role they lobbied their organizations or the larger community to provide workplaces that would allow people to bring to their creativity and passions to their work. In addition, they reminded their organizations of their obligations to the local and global community in ensuring that environmental practices and ethical decision making procedures were in place. “I know that there have been times when we have had the opportunity to acquire companies, but to do it we were going to have to layoff thousands of people. It is not good for anybody, it is not good for those people and it’s not good for the community” (participant, Groen, 2002, p. 132). Taking on a social advocacy role as part of their lived spirituality supports the thoughts of O’Murchu (1998) when he suggests that as people mature, evolve and work through their spirituality, there are several dimensions that become apparent in the second half of life. Specifically “there is a tendency to adopt ethical standards in lifestyle and work and involvement in cultural or social movements addressing the injustices and wrongs in our world” (p. 11-12).

The link between the social justice work of adult educators and their spirituality that I found within my study (Groen, 2002) echo the findings of other qualitative studies (Tisdell, 2000; English, 2001), which also sought to explore how the spiritual journeys of adult educators informed their practice within their various contexts (international work, higher education, and community education). Specifically, Tisdell (2000) found that the participants in her study saw their spirituality and their social justice efforts to be inextricably linked. “They had a strong sense of mission, fueled by their spirituality, of challenging systems of oppression based on race, class, gender, ability and sexual orientation in their adult education practices. But their involvement in social action efforts also called them back to their spirituality” (p. 328). As English (2001) explored the connections between work, meaning making and spirituality, she also found that her participants, who were involved in international adult education, felt that this work gave their life purpose and meaning and “more importantly, the work connected them to a larger project, justice for all. This collective sense and the notion that they were contributing to the larger whole was a strong motivator and part of their integrated spirituality” (p. 5).

Not only did I find resonance with these two studies, but I also found a similar resonance within the historical roots of the adult education field. The critical difference between the past and the present is that the spiritual anchors of past adult educators were closely aligned with a religious faith, whereas the present spiritual anchors of the adult educators cited in the studies just mentioned are much more diffuse, broadly defined and associated with a more secular spirituality. However, regardless of the nature of the spiritual anchors, the responses of these past and present adult educators are the same; a central manifestation of our spirituality as adult educators is seen in our social justice work. The following sections will explore the spiritual roots of the past and the present interpretation of spirituality in order to demonstrate that making the link between spirituality and adult education can help us re-awaken and reclaim our social justice roots.

Social Justice, Spirituality and Adult Education: The Past

According to Stubblefield (1993), “the roots of many adult education programs lay initially in a concern for social justice and radical change both reformist and radical in conjunction with workers’ education” (p. 288). He calls these early voices “prophetic voices” as they worked against unjust structures of society and emphasized the collective political and economic achievement of equality and social justice and he makes the point that deep religious roots informed many of these voices.

Myles Horton and Paulo Freire are two examples of seminal figures within the adult education field who demonstrate the links between adult education, social justice, and religious spirituality. Myles Horton was a founder of the Highlander Folk School on the Cumberland Plateau in Tennessee, in 1932. The area was one of the poorest Appalachian counties and an area dominated by powerful coal interests. He started programs with rural workers who were being displaced from their land and driven into mills, factories and mines as part of the development of the rural South. Over the years, Horton and the school became involved in providing residential education for union leaders from around the South and also became involved in civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s. Freire, like Horton, also became involved in democratic education, focusing on literacy and popular education in Brazil. Bell, Gaventa, and Peters (1990) in their forward of the book *We Make the Road by Walking: Conversations on Education and Social Change* reflect upon the significance of the religious spiritual roots of both Freire and Horton:

Both were drawn to the social aspects of Christianity, among other early intellectual influences. Myles went on from college to Union Seminary in the late 1920s, where he was influenced by Reinhold Niebuhr, the Christian socialist and social critic.... Freire, too, was highly influenced by a growing Catholic Action movement, which was to lay the ground for what would later become known as the liberation theology movement. As a student, he joined a Catholic Action group at the university, which, unlike most of the church, was “more preoccupied with the concept of society and social change, and acutely aware of the conditions of poverty and hunger in the Northeast.” (p. xv)

Father Jimmy Tompkins and Father Moses Coady were two early Canadian adult educators well known for founding the Antigonish Movement of the late 1920s and early 1930s in eastern Nova Scotia. “The main thrust of the Antigonish Movement was education for economic development through projects such as co-operatives and credit unions” (Gillen, 1998, p. 273). Gillen also states that the “Antigonish Movement provided a channel through which poor Cape Breton Farmers, fishers and workers gained control over their lives and brought about social change” (p. 275). Like Horton and Freire, Tompkins and Coady were also influenced by their religious faith and translated their faith into social action. “Moses Coady and Jimmy Tompkins were Catholic priests However, Coady did not see the movement as a specifically Catholic movement. In fact the Antigonish Movement was not affiliated with any single religious denomination, although its founders drew from the wisdom of their religious past” (Gillen, 1998, p. 275).

English, Fenwick, and Parsons (2003) cite the work of Lindeman (1961) and Yeaxlee (1925) as they demonstrate links between some of the “early concerns of the field for spiritually-informed practice and socially responsible adult education training” (p. 21). Fisher’s research (1997) points out that many of Lindeman’s main ideas were nurtured during a period of time (1912 to 1930) when the social gospel movement had a significant impact on American Protestantism. Specifically, Lindeman’s positions in YMCA, the Congregation Church and the extension movement placed him in the center of organizations that were greatly influenced by the social gospel movement. The social gospel movement sought to focus not only on the individual aspects of religion, but also on social concerns such as the elimination of social and economic injustice, particularly among the working classes. Fisher (1997) connects Lindeman’s writings to social justice ideas and methods by stating that Lindeman was “providing leadership for communities beginning from the bottom up, working with and respecting workers and common people, and building knowledge and responsibility by helping people learn from their experience” (p. 6).

Basil Yeaxlee, writer of *Spiritual Values in Adult Education* (1925), is commonly heralded as one of the first adult educators who stressed the connection between adult education and spirituality, believing that all education has a spiritual base. Like Lindeman, he was strongly influenced and active within YMCA during the social gospel movement in the early part of the twentieth century. He, like other early adult educators, “saw the adult education movement as a means of achieving a harmonized world and a more democratic lifestyle. He would have all adults aware of and responsive to ‘industrial disputes and social crises’” (Cross-Durant, 1984, p. 286).

These early adult educators were informed by their religious faith, but theirs was a faith that moved against the dominant tide of religious thought that was and is still dominating North America. As Deshler (1993) points out,

During the past 200 years, the dominant influence of privatistic individualism has pervaded both religious and educational perspectives particularly in North America. This emphasis on privatistic individualism obscured the need to focus on or to criticize the structural weaknesses and injustices of society. Liberation emphasizes, which included articulating a vision of the Kingdom of God, recognizing forms of oppression, and criticizing privatistic individualism was, for the most part, ignored or down played. The emphasis was on personal morality, not social ethics. (p. 302)

Rather, these early adult educators were influenced by the social gospel of their religious faith; which sought to address problems of industrialization and urbanization by focusing on the social as well as the individual aspects of religion (Fisher, 1997).

Spirituality, Adult Education and Social Justice: The Present

As just stated by Deshler, in the preceding quote, the dominating influence of private individualism has not only been felt within religious circles, but it has also been felt within the adult education field. This is of concern to many present adult educators as they worry about losing our heritage of social justice work. Selman and Dapier (1991) postulate, “Adult education

today is overwhelmingly dominated by what has been termed the “service ethic.” With increased professionalization and institutionalization of the field, adult education is seen increasingly as a service to individuals rather than as a force to shape the nature of community” (p. 63). Collins (1991) expresses almost the same concern as he believes that mainstream adult education practice is so preoccupied with individual learners and their deficiencies that it neglects to critique the social system, thus unwittingly supporting the status quo in society and perpetuating a social system that is creating an impoverished way of life for many Canadians.

I, like English, Fenwick and Parsons (2003), believe the field of adult education and training would do well to recover some of its early focus on socially responsible-adult education and training and I also believe that revisiting our spiritual roots will help us reclaim this early focus. However, this does not mean that we need to return to the religious based practice of our predecessors, but a spiritual practice. The following section briefly explores the present notions of spiritually and adult education practice and how they can help us reclaim our social justice heritage.

The modern break with a religious spirituality can be done with the use of the term “secular spirituality.” Van Ness (1996) helps clarify this distinction when he states that religious spirituality is based on a set of organized principles that are shared by a group, whereas a secular spirituality is based on an individual pursuit of meaning. Often they overlap, but, as one of my participants explained, spirituality is broader than religion.

They do intersect, religion and spirituality, but I see spirituality as being the umbrella area and religion falling under that. So in other words, my spirituality is my core relationship, my core beliefs, my meaning I bring to my life, my relationships with self, with others, with my God and religion would be how, in a formal way, I express that. So one, in other words, is more fundamental than the other. (participant, Groen, 2002, p. 89)

This definition of spirituality can still be further expanded to include connectedness and responsibility, and as a result it is fundamentally different than the private individual religious pursuit described by Deschler and more closely in line with the social gospel values of our predecessors. It is particularly important that we move beyond an exclusively individual religious based spirituality, if we wish to reclaim our social justice roots by linking our practice with our spirituality. Mitroff and Denton (1999) conducted a study of spirituality within the workplace and found that while spirituality was an appropriate and welcome topic in the workplace, religion was not welcome. “It [religion] was viewed as dogmatic, intolerant and dividing people more than bringing them together. In contrast spirituality was viewed as universal, non-denominational, broadly inclusive and tolerant” (p. xvii).

Wilf Bean (2000) writes about a spirituality for our time that is particularly relevant for us as adult educators. “There remains within us a need for meaning, for understanding how our lives fit into the larger world ...it gives rise to a number of concerns, such as the suffering of others and a desire to alleviate that suffering when possible” (p. 72). Seeing part of our “meaning making” within our spiritual journey as a response to suffering within our world links another central quality of secular spirituality; we are connected to others and to the universe around us.

With this view of connectedness and interdependence, comes our spiritual response as adult educators. As we seek meaning within our practice and recognize our interdependence with the world around us, it becomes clear that our spiritual pursuit to find meaning brings us back to the social justice heritage of adult education.

Fenwick, English and Parsons (2001) explore various dimensions of spirituality and in their eighth and final strand they explore spirituality as a response. "Service may be enacted in building or transforming communities, cultivating sacred environments towards a 'spirit'-filled world, or simply attending deeply and with compassion to another person. Service may be focused on justice, as in Ghandi's "loving people into transformation," or Myles Horton's celebration of common human experience to liberate human empowerment in civil rights struggles "(p. 6).

Conclusion

Adult education has had a unique voice in our society. Its legacy is one of challenging, questioning and searching for the best in individuals, institutions and society. It has often battled the status quo by seeking equality, justice and access for all within our communities. Past adult educators, like Horton and Coady, who represent our social justice heritage, derived their source of meaning for this work from a religious faith grounded in the social gospel. Perhaps the present focus on spirituality within our society, as more and more people seek meaning and community, provides us with an opportunity to reclaim our social justice heritage. Because of the present focus on spirituality in our lives, we as adult educators have a chance to reclaim our past. As we begin to link our practice to a lived spirituality, more and more voices are beginning to connect this lived spirituality with the pursuit of equality, justice and access for all within their communities. Sound familiar? Horton, Freire, Lindeman, Tompkins and Coady are hoping that our spiritual roots, like their social gospel roots will encourage us to reclaim our social justice heritage.

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GED Scholars Initiative at Kent State University
“Inspiring the inspired”

Joanne Kilgour Dowdy,
Kent State University

Sandra Golden,
GED Scholars Initiative

**Paper presented at the National Conference on Multicultural Education,
San Antonio, TX
October 22, 2002.**

Abstract

The GED Scholars Initiative (GEDSI) is a federally funded project of the Ohio Literacy Resource Center at Kent State University (KSU). The Ohio Literacy Resource Center (OLRC) serves as resource center for adult educators and practitioners who provide direct services to adults enrolled in adult basic literacy education (ABLE) classes. The OLRC and the Academic Success Center (ASC), a division of Undergraduate Studies at KSU are the principal partners in the development of the GEDSI. The Initiative is currently being piloted at the Kent and Stark campuses. The GEDSI was established to create and enhance academic, technology, and financial supportive services for GED graduates. This article focuses on females who have obtained their GED and are full- or part-time students at KSU. The women in this study participated in one-on-one interviews and a formal questionnaire that included these items: They were homeschooled or dropped out of high school and began a GED program at a later date. The results of this preliminary investigation have led to the establishment of a peer mentor group, a computer lab and technology workshops, a shadowing program for interested GED graduates in the community, and closer collaboration with the GED Scholars at Kent State in the planning for the second year of the federally sponsored Initiative.

Introduction

General information about the characteristics and needs of educationally disadvantaged students in higher education offers some insights that may be applicable to the GED graduates who go on to higher education. For example, numerous studies have documented the fact that many students enter college unprepared for its academic demands (Hashway, Baham, Hashway, & Rogers, 1999; Lederman, Ribardo, & Ryzewic, 1985). Researchers have also documented that

helping students become more strategic college learners contributes to the academic motivation they need to persist in college (Hock, Schumaker, & Deshler, 1995; Rings & Sheets, 1991). In this tradition, therefore, the GED Scholars Initiative (GEDSI) at Kent State University is building a variety of academic support services designed to support students' academic success.

Scientific research related to persistence and retention in college (Astin, 1993; Tinto, 1975) has concluded that personal relationships with others allow students to become integrated into the academic community. Further, those integrated into the academic community are more likely to persist to graduation. The GEDSI project is also planning opportunities that offer GED graduates at Kent State University an anchor for receiving support, interacting comfortably with college personnel, and developing the foundational skills and positive identities for academic success and college completion. Moreover, the model built through the GEDSI project is intent on providing guidance for other institutions of higher education to provide the same kinds of support for their own GED graduates. This article looks at the experiences of a group of white, female GED graduates at the university and discusses the implications of their participation in the school as non-traditional students.

History of the General Education Development Scholars Initiative (GEDSI)

For the past decade, the Ohio Literacy Resource Center at Kent State University (OLRC) has provided support for adult literacy programs throughout and beyond Ohio. In June, 2002, OLRC began a project to support GED graduates attending the Kent and Stark campuses at the university and to develop a replicable program that other colleges and universities could adopt. At Kent State, the Academic Success Center has a long history of supporting students' academic achievement. These two agencies are the principal partners in the GED Scholars Initiative.

In Ohio alone, approximately 18,000 people earn their GEDs each year. The vast majority of these people need additional education to achieve their goals as workers, citizens, and family members for this reason. Also, one performance indicator of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 is "placement in, retention in, or completion of postsecondary education." Yet very little is currently known about the needs of GED graduates who attend universities. This lack of information contributes to the limited success of GED graduates at the college level.

To learn more about the needs of GED graduates who attend Kent and Stark campuses, a planning team was created to bring structure and purpose to the GED Scholars Initiative. The GEDSI's vision was designed to address the needs of students who had earned their GEDs and were currently attending KSU. Through research and development this initiative will provide students with support to meet the University's academic standards, complete program studies, gain technological expertise, and become aware of career opportunities in their field of study. As well, the Initiative is intent on gaining a better understanding of GED graduates attending colleges and universities.

The decision to develop a replicable program is based on the concept that learning about these "aspiring KSU graduates" and from future GED graduates is a continuous process. It is also important to the GEDSI that relationships within and beyond the university community be built and cultivated. Relationships with the surrounding community, adult basic literacy programs, and community agencies can sustain the growth of the Initiative. Further, learning

about the students' needs and characteristics and having them actively involved in the process of creating the GEDSI are critical pieces to ensure that the Initiative evolves and moves towards being a successful, quality program.

Learning about the GED Project's Scholars

Building relationships with students in this GEDSI community is important to the success of the program. What we learn about the students can help sustain and extend the level of success being enjoyed by GED graduates at the college. In an effort to build an understanding of female GED graduates at Kent State the director and one senior researcher on the GEDSI team undertook a study to examine the characteristics of the female students among the GED graduates. Although these GED graduates represent a small group at the university, their issues and concerns are great. Table 1 shows the representative numbers of various ethnic groups in the ABL program in 2001.

Table 1
Ohio Adult Basic Literacy Education (ABLE) demographic report, 2001

American Indian or Alaskan Native:	543
Asian:	2,638
Black or African American:	19,974
Hispanic or Latina	4,155
White:	37,783
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islanders	486
Total:	65,679

Note: the racial and ethnic background of adults who attended ABL programs during the 2001 fiscal year.

During the fiscal year 2001, the Ohio ABL performance report stated that the gender descriptors of this group of 65, 679 students included 49.7 % women and 50.3 % men. Among the students there was an age range from 16 to 60 plus years. In contrast to these statewide demographics, at Kent State during the fall of 2002, the Office of the University Registrar projected that the following ethnic/racial groups were enrolled as of September, 2002 (see Table 2).

Of the 13, 368 students the ages for female students ranged from below 17 years to over 65 years among the women (see Table 3).

Table 2
Kent State Demographics: Student Population, Fall: 2002

Asian:	246
Black:	1,440
International:	209
Hispanic:	221
Native American:	49
White:	16,363
Total:	18,383

Table 3
Female Students (GED graduates) at Kent State University for Quarters for 2002

13,368 of	21924
12,356 of	20449
5021 of	7517
2339 of	3650
Total:	13,368

Table 4
2002 Ethnic Breakdown of Students on the Kent and Regional campuses

Kent Campus:	
White: 85 %	Black: 7%
Regional:	
White: 90.6 %	Black; 4.6%

From these statistics we can deduce that White women are the majority in the state and at Kent State. This brings particular issues to bear in the establishing of their needs as GED

graduates and the ways in which support systems must interact to ensure their success in a traditional four-year college.

The GED Scholars Initiative Survey

Through the Office of Institutional Research, we learned that there are 661 undergraduate students who make up the GED graduate enrollment at Kent State. In July, 2002, information about the GED Scholars Initiative and a survey were sent to about 300 GED graduates at the two campuses. Fifty were returned. Thirty-one females responded to the survey and the following demographic information was retrieved from their responses.

Table 5
Results of Female GED Scholars Initiative Survey

<u>Ethnic/Racial Group</u>	
White	24
Black	4
Asian or Pacific Islander	2
Mixed Background	3
<u>Marital Status</u>	
Married	7
Single	18
Divorced	6
<u>Employment</u>	
Part-Time	13
Full-Time	2
Unemployed	15
<u>Children</u>	
Parents	16
Childless	15
<u>Age</u>	
18-30	18
31-40	7
41-50	2
51 or older	1

Note: Survey responses from 31 females from the Kent and Stark campuses.

A few of the questions posed on the survey were as follows: What are your concerns as a KSU student? What support services have you utilized at KSU?; and What are your needs as a KSU student? Responding students shared the following concerns about time management and meeting financial needs. In the area of time management, the women said, “I (have) little time due to my part-time job. My English and math skills are weak;” and “My concerns as a KSU student are mainly trying to juggle work, home life, school, and still finding time to study. But

my biggest concern is trying to find the classes I need in evening hours because my next goal is to get a full-time job, so I can get married.”

In the area of financial stress, the students said, “My need as a student at KSU are funds needed to pay for classes and more evening class availability.” Also, “To get a great education, learn as much as I can. Have hands on access learning in such classes as biology and chemistry. But most importantly is to be able to pay my tuition to go to this fine college. Since I have no financial help and little money.” Finally, one student said: “To have access to open minded instructors that are available and willing to devote time to individual students; to be supplied the financial aids that will help me in my independent journey through college.”

There were also comments about the ambitions to go on to graduate school. These included, “To get the best possible education that will allow me to be accepted in medical school and to have greater knowledge for a career and graduate school. Also I like to have the best possible access to a better education so I may use it to my advantage after I graduate.” Another student said, “My main concerns as a KSU student are doing well in school and graduating to hopefully go on to get my master’s degree.” From another woman graduate, “As a KSU student, my main needs are that I have a place to stay, a place to study, sleep, food, exercise and [get] intellectual stimulation from my University.” And still another stated that she wanted “To expand my knowledge in all areas through independent thinking skills; to meet new and interesting people and be exposed to new ideas.”

To further investigate the needs of females with GEDs attending Kent State, one-on-one video-taped interviews were conducted with four of the women who applied for the stipend or contacted our office to volunteer their services in the development of the GEDSI program. These volunteers were all White women and only one did not have a child. Their majors included, education; art history/history minor; an individualized program that leaned toward social work; and anthropology. One of the scholars was ending her third year at Kent, another student was at the beginning of her tenure at the college, and one was finishing her first year as an undergraduate. The students were all in their twenties: three are unmarried and single parents, one is married, and one was home-schooled.

Video Interviews with the GED Graduates

From one-on one-video interviews with the four women, we culled information about the history of the students before arriving at Kent State, their experiences since enrolling at the two campuses, and their plans for their academic futures. In response to the question “How did you come to be at Kent State?”, there was an interesting mix of stories about overcoming difficult odds and coming to a turning point in life when college seemed the next best move to make. Student responses included the following:

Dee

I applied to Kent State very late. Didn’t receive an admissions letter. I was crushed, so I drove down here and I demanded to know why I wasn’t accepted and they said, “oh we accepted [you] months ago.” And it turns out I just never got the letter. So very late, I got all my financial aid done and I got in at ’99.

Barb

My parents came and gave me an ultimatum and said “get your GED, go to college and start paying rent and your own insurance and all that.” So when the next GED test was available 3 weeks later, I went and took it, reapplied to all the colleges that I had applied to previously, and got into all of them because I had the GED.

Karen

So I always planned on going to college. But when I got older, there were a lot of disturbances going on in my life, so I ended up withdrawing from school even though I had been a 4.0 student. And so that didn't work out. But then I, my father encouraged me to go back to school. I didn't want to, so I got my GED instead.

Lidia

Actually, in high school I wanted to go to college. I took college prep classes and all that. I got pregnant when I was 16. So I dropped out of school two years before I was supposed to graduate, got my GED within 4 months of my daughter being born and at that point I just sort of signed off college because I figured there was no way I could do it. . . actually got married and figured, well, it's not going to be my life. Things change, and I'm no longer married. I just figured that's my open door [so I started college].

In response to the question, “What has it been like for you since joining Kent State?”, the students gave answers that reflected their growth as people and academic students, and their enthusiasm for the challenges that college represented.

Dee

College is very rough to get back into. I guess I was so disappointed with high school I felt very unmotivated after I finally did get here and achieved all that, a lot of the motivation ran out. The harder I tried and the closer I got to the end of my schooling now I've kicked back in, now that I can graduate and get my degree and go back to that high school, visit that teacher and, you know, [say] "I did it."

Barb

Professors there, and even a few here, assume that because you have your GED, you're stupid. That you're a high school drop out, or that you weren't up to par in high school so you had to go somewhere else to get your diploma. And, because of that, [in] some cases they make it easier for you, others they make it harder on you. It just depends on the teachers. Some teachers don't even care; some teachers, when they hear you have your GED, figure you're smarter than you are. You really have to learn to read the professor, something I never had to do before [coming to Kent State].

Lidia

My biggest thing was, how am I going to make it from one end [of the campus to the other]? [The academic counselor] said [that] in probably 15 minutes, high paced, you can make it

anywhere. Cause my first semester I scheduled three or four days before school starts. I made my schedule. Not all the classes I wanted. I started at 7:45 and quit at 2:00, nonstop, every fifty minutes. So, [the counselor] guaranteed that I could do it and I was able to.

On the issues of the direction that they felt they would take once they completed college, the women had several ambitions with regard to their careers and the future of their children. These are some of the plans that we hear from the GED graduates:

Kathy

I would like to, well, I'll end up doing an individualized major because they don't have a major program that really fits what I want to do. If I were able to get a degree in what I wanted to do, I would end up with four different bachelors degrees. So I'm just going to work with the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences to make my own program and develop my own curriculum.

Dee

I recently have also found that through my pregnancy I used certified mid-wives and I found that there is a great need of them, for them out there. With my biology and human evolution it is right up that path and I found it a very rewarding experience to have someone there the whole time who was not so medical or formal and it really helped me out a lot . . .and I thought that maybe that is more of a calling that I could go to and I could be there on more of a personal level than sitting in a dark basement somewhere. I'm thinking I might go into that.

Lidia

Right now my major is education. I actually want to be a biology major. So I'm kind of testing the biology waters. . . . Actually, I looked into park ranger. I thought maybe that would be the ticket I guess. More interested in the biology of things. That seems more of what I wanted to do. I looked it up on the Internet.

Barb

I really love art, so I want to get into some restoration work. I think the first love of my life is probably history. I also want to get into some restoration of homes and buildings, monuments, things like that. And then, there isn't a whole lot of money in that. To make money, I'm going to do interior architecture work, designing interiors for new homes and stuff like that. That's the goal.

Further, students shared their ambitions for the GED Initiative and wanted to become part of the mentoring circle that they felt should be established as early as possible. In their response to the question "What do you hope for the Initiative?" we heard of their interest in improving the situation for other GED graduates at Kent State in these reflections:

Barb

Probably [I can] help with advising students, I think. The biggest problem I had coming in here is that nobody could tell me what I should do once I got here. Nobody. There was not a person outside of my professors who really were trying to get you into their [class] – you talk to a history professor, they try to steer you toward the history angle, you talk to a

science professor, he's telling you [that] you should go into physics. I think just mentoring and advising new students coming in, especially GED students. Most of them aren't right out of high school. Most of them are older, married, up into their 40s, 50s, even older than that. It's harder for them to acclimate into a community of 18-year-old freshmen. A 45 year old mother of four is not going to relate to an 18-year-old blond cheerleader.

Kathy

I know some people go to college because they want to get a really, really good job and they want to make lots of money, and that's cool. That's good for them, but I don't care. I don't care about money. If I walk out of college with 10 degrees and I never make more than a thousand dollars, then I don't care. Because it's not really about that for me. I mean, I see any knowledge that I get, if I can get that knowledge and I'm motivated, then I can spread that knowledge to as many people as possible. And they can spread it to other people. That's what it comes down to.

Discussion

Between 1970 and 1993 the number of women in higher education had increased from 3.5 million to 7.5 million (Kopka & Korb, 1996). In 2000, Hayes and Flannery reported that more women than men were receiving bachelor's and master's degrees. Further, the authors found that women's completion of the doctoral degree increased by 38%. Women are, however, still clustered in the fields that confine them to lower status and financial rewards that are below those of men in those categories (Kopka and Korb, 1996). This fact does not deter white, female GED graduates, as far as we can tell from our limited research at Kent State, from pursuing higher education and improving their chances of enjoying an increased level of financial security.

Given the level of self-efficacy that the women in the interviews demonstrated in their efforts to become holders of the high school equivalency diploma, it is not surprising to learn that they have managed to survive and thrive within the classes where they are perceived as traditional high school graduates. In fact, it might be a good guess to say that they have been thriving, because they fit the majority description (just-out-of-high-school, single, white females) of students at Kent State and are, therefore, benefiting from the "cover" of being taken for traditional high school graduates. So in the tradition of the GED graduates' experience as hands-on learners, they are leaning to apply their life skills to set goals for themselves in the new academic environment.

The four women who decided to enroll in college at Kent State and continue their education journey have very strong support systems (family, significant others, teachers, and fellow students), who gave them a lift when they were learning to be successful students. There was more than one reference to parents, such as, "My parents came and gave me an ultimatum and said get your GED, go to college and start paying rent and your own insurance and all that." Also, each woman who spoke with the GEDSI team had a close relative or friend who had completed a level of higher education and encouraged them to continue with their studies. "So I went ahead and got the GED and I talked to the woman [at the GED site] and she said, absolutely not, you can go anywhere you want. So the lady there was very inspiring." The group of GED

graduates also talked about the need to be a strong support system for their own children and to show them the example of dignity in the face of adversity. As Dana explained, “I learned a lot of self-respect. I think that is the most important thing, self-esteem, and that I can take care of myself, and I can do it. I had a lot of help but without myself I wouldn't have been able to do it.”

The female GED graduates also found that professors in particular programs were very helpful as they became acquainted with the students on a personal basis. When three of them became acquainted with a professor who took a personal interest in their lives, and future plans, even in the details of life outside of school, the inspiration for working hard and finding solutions to personal and academic challenges increased significantly. One woman explained, “I've had a [professor] this semester who just went out of her way for me. It was my first semester back after having a child so it was interesting. Taking a whole year off it really puts you behind. Not ready to go back to school because you are staying up all night with the baby, so it was very difficult. She really helped me out.”

Our four volunteers talked about the importance of scheduling their lives and class loads so that they could function efficiently between home, school, and work. They felt that there was a need for school counselors to be proactive in the suggestions for efficient time management so that college work did not suffer from neglect. A young mother explained, “I'd get down and not want to finish something and [counselors and friends] would come and pick my spirit back up and really motivate me.”

The women talked about the challenge of finding an age group within the student population of the university that they could identify with as peers. Freshmen seemed very young and immature. This presented a challenge to the women as they sought to find peer groups that they could call on for academic support and a social circle within the college community. There was a strong theme of needing to complete the college degree so that they could inspire others in their lives: the kin and extended family. The extended family included friends who had not yet completed their GED training and young children who were looking to their parents as role models. The senior who spoke with us stated, “I really had to put forth a little extra effort and it will make it all well worth it, to have that diploma in my hand and then to decide that I want to go to graduate school and it was all my decision and not so much based on coming to college to prove somebody wrong.”

As far as recommendations to the GED Scholars Initiative the women believe that it could foster a high level of success for GED graduates in the university system. The GED graduates recommended the formation of a group of peer mentors, peer study groups, advising specifically for GED graduates, and educating professors and college counselors on the issues facing GED graduates in college: the age difference of traditional college freshmen compared to GED graduates, the wide variety of experiences that GED graduates bring to the college experience, and the challenge of coordinating family, school, and a social life.

Multicultural issues present themselves in the form of (a) challenges to a rounded social life for mature women living and studying in a freshman culture, (b) navigating the intricate system of classes and adult services, and (c) learning to be advocates for themselves as non-traditional students with professors.

Implications

There are several implications for universities where GED graduates are enrolled in their academic programs. A few of them can be listed here, based on the available data that the GEDSI has collected to date. Other recommendations will be forthcoming as we work with the GED graduates to form a mentoring cohort and continue other project activities.

Successful GED graduates who enroll in college can be role models for aspiring GED graduates and college-bound students. The stories of endurance, support in the face of personal and academic adversity, and the use of a vision for a better life can be practical prompts for discussions in the GED classrooms where women are shaping their educational and financial future. Video recordings of these women's testimonies regarding the importance of a positive attitude to succeeding in college are a powerful use of their collective experience. Such presentations of the women's testimonies to success can be used to inspire discussions about support systems for the students in GED classrooms and college admissions offices.

The General Educational Development (GED) Scholars Initiative has the potential of setting the course for GED graduates who need peer mentoring at the start and during their time in college programs: A strong theme emerging from the data was supported by statements such as the following: "I see any knowledge that I get, if I can get that knowledge and I'm motivated, then I can spread that knowledge to as many people as possible. And they can spread it to other people. That's what it comes down to [in my college journey]." The development of peer study groups and tutoring appropriate to the learning styles of the GED graduates would establish an environment that promotes and ensures GED scholars mentoring for success in college courses.

Colleges where GED graduates are enrolled should take careful note of the way in which multicultural issues are discussed among women who come to the university from GED programs. The challenges of finding appropriate mentorship, tutors, same-aged friends, well-balanced study groups, professors who have high expectations of the GED graduates; the preparation of GED graduates for self-disclosure about coming from a non-traditional high school setting; and the need to find a peer group with which to share the challenges and joys of being a member of a university community, are all part of the package that represents the "differences" that these students live with.

Interviewing GED graduates in the university system can be very useful to academic programs that are learning to be strong support systems for the women with GED preparation. A perspective that embraces these students as part of the multicultural community of higher education will enhance the chances of these students' success.

Conclusion

Through these interviews, surveys, and data from Kent State University and Ohio Department of Education, we have gathered from this small, unique population that they have a powerful and informed voice. Their experiences, challenges, and successes are pivotal in understanding how universities can assess the needs of non-traditional students and therefore

develop and create programs to meet their needs. Due to efforts of the GED Scholars Initiative, many of their concerns and issues have or are being address. For example, a mentoring program is being developed to match incoming GED graduates with current GED graduates, a student committee has been formed to allow students to express their concerns, issues, and challenges as a collective group and make recommendations and suggestions to the GED Scholars Initiative advisory committee. In addition, a shadowing program was implemented to encourage potential students who have expressed an interest in enrolling in college to shadow a current GED graduate for a day to learn first-hand the college student experience.

Also, as a result of a partnership with the College of Arts and Sciences, a university orientation class has been established for incoming GED graduates. This one credit hour class will give students new to the university an overview of services and programs that are available to them. They will have an opportunity to learn how to navigate the university systems, such as financial aid, career services, and academic advising. Additionally, they will gain soft skills in areas such as study skills, time management, and navigating the Internet. As to the supportive aspect, current students are encouraged to utilize the services of the Academic Success Center, participate in “free” technology training workshops, and use a computer lab has been created just for their use.

As the Initiative continues to grow, there are many more issues that need to be addressed. Thus, through collaboration and partnering with university administrators, community agencies and advocates, and the students, the cultural challenges and issues that these students have shared with the researchers influences the work being done to support the GEDSI students and continues to be student-centered in its response. We must creatively determine how to inform professors and the wider university community that not all students enrolled in college are just out of high school, but that they may have also been homeschooled. And in some instances, GED graduates may not have even been in an educational environment since 9th, 10th, or 11th grade. As we listen and learn from our GED graduates we can continue to address our major concern about the way in which we can share our new understanding of them with society. We must continue to seek the inspiration to tell our whole country, and the world looking on, that a GED is an alternative to a high school diploma, a prism that allows us to see the many ways in which talent and determination come together in a student, and that GED graduates are highly capable of being successful in college and earning college degrees.

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NEW HORIZONS IN ADULT EDUCATION
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BOOK REVIEW

By Lois Zachary

Leadership Development Services, LLC
Phoenix, AZ

**From Teaching to Mentoring: Principle and Practice,
Dialogue and Life in Adult Education**

By Herman, L and Mandell, A.
(New York: Routledge Falmer, 2004)

From Teaching to Mentoring is a serious and thought provoking book about the heady and often challenging day-to-day work of facilitating adult learning through mentoring. Authors Lee Herman and Alan Mandell immediately draw us into the rich and absorbing dialogue of actual mentoring relationships while they engage their students in the journey of learning. As their mentoring experiences and reflections on practice and philosophy (replete with wonderings and wonderments, struggles and stirrings) unfold, they make Aristotle, Socrates and Plato very present to us and our work as mentors.

The authors critically reflect on their mentoring practices by applying the lens of philosophy in very concrete and personal ways. The ideals of cognitive love, contemplative needs, and intellectual reciprocity resonate deeply because they so accurately name and claim the lived process of mentoring work. By choosing to expand our practice perspectives through a philosophical lens, Herman and Mandell simultaneously deepen our understanding of and renew our appreciation for reflective mentoring practice.

The “thick” description of mentoring offered within these pages, uses the context of Empire State College as a laboratory for learning. The qualitative approach allows us to experience philosophy at work (“learning as an invitation”). At the same time, we are awed by the role and responsibility of the mentor as learner in the mentoring relationship. “We concentrate on learning *from, with* and *for the sake* of our students, each one individually.” We are reminded that mentors need to “learn” those whom they mentor through a gradual and deliberate co-discovery process.

As they reflect on and analyze their dialogue with students, Herman and Mandell remind us about many of the essential characteristics of an effective mentor. For example, we learn about “waiting as learning” (it takes time to learn). Mentors need to exercise patience to facilitate learning. Mentors need to be open -- to accept truth as provisional, to “expect that the content of individual outcomes will be, like all knowledge claims, incomplete and diverse.” Mentors, they say, should respect the student as knower. Rather than provide answers, mentors need to ask questions and be agile at asking the right question at the right time.

From Teaching to Mentoring: Principle and Practice models the dynamic interplay between the principle and practice it espouses. It invites us to bring who we are to what we do as mentors, to present our “whole self to the experience, integrating the personal and the academic.” Anyone interested in becoming a more reflective mentoring practitioner, regardless of practice context, will find these pages infused with insights and inspiration. One word of caution -- this is not a quick and easy read. It begs for the deep work of engaging oneself with the material through the process of thoughtful reflection. As Peter Koestenbaum, philosopher and business consultant, reminds us, “Nothing is more practical than for people to deepen themselves.” This is the gift that Herman and Mandell offer.

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E-mail address: horizons@nova.edu

Mailing address:

Nancy Gadbow, Editor, New Horizons in Adult Education
Nova Southeastern University
Department of Higher Education Leadership/FGSEHS
1750 N.E. 167th Street
North Miami Beach, FL 33162