

Kansas State University Libraries

**New Prairie Press**

---

Adult Education Research Conference

---

## The Representation of Women in Adult Education Quarterly 1985-2022: A Literature Review

Lisa Baumgartner

Lauren Chaney

Follow this and additional works at: <https://newprairiepress.org/aerc>



Part of the [Adult and Continuing Education Administration Commons](#)



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 4.0 License](#)

---

This Event is brought to you for free and open access by the Conferences at New Prairie Press. It has been accepted for inclusion in Adult Education Research Conference by an authorized administrator of New Prairie Press. For more information, please contact [cads@k-state.edu](mailto:cads@k-state.edu).

# **Representation of Women in *Adult Education Quarterly* 1985-2022**

**<sup>1</sup>Lisa M. Baumgartner and <sup>2</sup>Lauren Chaney**

<sup>1</sup>Counseling, Leadership, Adult Education and School Psychology Department, Texas State University, Texas, USA

<sup>2</sup>Office of Academic Success, School of Social Work, University of Incarnate Word, Texas, USA

## **Abstract**

This literature review investigates women-centered articles in *Adult Education Quarterly* between 1985-2022. Findings indicate a predominance of qualitative research studies, increased use of critical frameworks, and multiple ways women are portrayed.

*Keywords:* women, literature review, adult education

Although integral to adult education initiatives, women's contributions to adult education and issues pertinent to women have remained in the shadows until recently. Often women have been examined as a monolithic group (Merriam & Cunningham, 1989). However, women's contributions to adult education have recently emerged (Imel & Bersch, 2014).

As more women have entered the professoriate and workplace over the past 37 years, we wondered how women were represented in a premier journal, *Adult Education Quarterly* (AEQ), from 1985-2022. A comprehensive review of articles from 1985-2022 could inform researchers about the state of women-centered research in AEQ and spur future research.

This integrative literature review aimed to explore articles concerning women in AEQ from 1985-2022. Questions included: 1) What research methods are used? 2) What conceptual frameworks are used? 3) What are the topics covered? 4) How are women portrayed?

## **Theoretical Framework**

We utilized a critical feminist framework to analyze the literature. This women-centered framework acknowledges power. The hegemony of patriarchy is upheld through social norms and values. Critical feminist theory says that gender is socially constructed. Women resist the oppression of the patriarchy and face multiple oppressions based on various positionalities (Crenshaw, 1991; Lorber, 1990).

## **Method**

We searched using the databases ProQuest, Education Source, Academic Source Complete, and EBSCOhost, as well as a hand search of AEQ articles from 1985-2022. We analyzed 57 women-focused articles using a critical feminist framework. We included conceptual and empirical articles and literature reviews. We entered article information on an Excel spreadsheet under relevant categories. We used the constant comparative method (Corbin & Strauss, 1990) to look within and between articles to ascertain answers to the research questions. We performed initial and axial coding to find answers to the research questions.

## **Findings**

Preliminary findings indicate article publication dates: 1985-1989: 2; 1990-1999: 12; 2000-2009: 24; 2010-2019:13; 2020-2022: 6. Methods included qualitative (44), quantitative (5)

mixed methods (1); conceptual articles (5) and literature reviews (2). Topics included: Women in higher education, women's experiences in community/nonformal settings, and the representation of women in scholarship, history, and research.

### **Conceptual Frameworks**

The conceptual frameworks included but were not limited to critical theories such as Black feminist theory, Freirean critical theory, critical feminist theory, and public pedagogy. Learning theories used included transformative, self-directed, and arts-based learning.

### **Portrayal of Women**

Women were portrayed as 1) deficient, 2) managing multiple roles, 3) learners, 4) marginalized, and 5) resilient and resistant. Initially seen as deficient, women gained confidence through learning and social interaction learning the computer (Lin et al., 2012). Women managed multiple roles of caretaker, worker, and student (Vaccaro & Lovell, 2010). Women as learners discussed learning theory. Most articles portrayed women as seen as marginalized. Women were marginalized by the intersection of multiple positionalities, such as immigrant status, race/ethnicity, and gender (Zhu, 2020). Women were seen as resilient and empowered in a racist, classist, patriarchal society (Sealey-Ruiz, 2007).

### **Conclusion and Future Research**

Although many articles confirmed Hayes and Smith's (1994) research, the research revealed another category—women as resilient and empowered. The intersection of various positionalities affected women's lives and experiences. Also, more conceptual frameworks used a critical component. Future research should include more quantitative and mixed methods studies and expand research to include women with disabilities and women in the LGBTQ community.

### **References**

- Corbin, J. M., & Strauss, A. (1990). Grounded theory research: Procedures, canons, and evaluative criteria. *Qualitative Sociology, 13*, 3-21.
- Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review, 6*, 1241-1299.
- Hayes, E., & Smith, L. (1994). Women in adult education: An analysis of perspectives in major journals. *Adult Education Quarterly, 44*, 201-221.
- Imel, S., & Bersch, G. T. (2014). *No small lives: Handbook of North American early women adult educators, 1925-1950*. Information Age Publishing.
- Lin, C. I., Tang, W., & Kuo, F-Y (2012). "Mommy wants to learn the computer": How middle aged and elderly women in Taiwan learn ICT through social support. *Adult Education Quarterly, 62*, 73-90.
- Lorber, J. (1990). Night to his day: The social construction of gender. *Gender & Society, 4*(1), 1-24.
- Merriam, S.B., & Cunningham, P. M. (Eds.), (1989). *Handbook of adult and continuing education*. Jossey-Bass
- Vaccaro, A., & Lovell, C. D. (2010). Inspiration from home; Understanding family as key to adult women's self-investment. *Adult Education Quarterly, 60*, 161-176.
- Sealey-Ruiz, Y. (2011). The culturally responsive teacher. *Adult Education Quarterly, 61*, 328-343.
- Zhu, Y. (2020). Striving for a better life: Immigrant women's learning experiences in the United States. *Adult Education Quarterly, 70*, 29-50.