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### The Invisible Voices Behind the Adult Education Movement

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## Executive Summary

### The Invisible Voices Behind the Adult Education Movement

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Adult learning has its roots in antiquity. Ancient teachers such as Confucius, Socrates, Plato, and Jesus are among the most influential teachers since the beginning of time (Lawton, 2001). J. A. Comenius has been credited with providing the roots of modern adult education because he advocated training teachers to work with adults (Savicevic, 1991). While one can easily find reference to the contributions of numerous male educators to the development of the field of Adult Education, the contributions of women to the field are not as evident in the literature. Hugo (2015) points out that women were the prime movers in the development of adult education in the 20<sup>th</sup> century when the definition of adult education is broadened to include “women’s clubs, settlement house work, suffrage, and library development” (p. 20). Rose (2015) notes that women do the “grunt work” because they focus their efforts on immediate, practical remedies for citizens’ health and welfare. While women’s efforts were valued during the tough times of the Depression, their accomplishments were disregarded as adult education became a profession tied to universities run by men (Welton, 2010). Rose (2015) states that not only did women play a role in the development of adult education, but that “they were integral to the development of adult education in the 20<sup>th</sup> century” (p. 4).

#### *Purpose of the Study*

This study aims to explore the contributions of female educators whose leadership, power, and activism influenced the movement of adult education.

#### *Research Questions*

How did female adult educators contribute to the conceptualization of adult education in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century?

How have the early contributions of female adult educators influenced adult education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?

#### *Methodology*

This research project will utilize historical data to seek to define the early role of women in the development of the field of adult education. Through the use of causal inference (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003), the researcher will seek to explore the relationship between the early experiences and contributions of adult women educators with the current status of females in the adult education arena.

#### *Results*

As this study is ongoing, the results are yet to be determined.

#### *Implications*

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The implications of this study have the potential to become a springboard to a more inclusive examination of the contributions of women in the adult education movement resulting in wider recognition of women's contributions to the field.

#### *Recommendations/Conclusions*

Recommendations and conclusions will be determined at the end of the study.

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