

# can we reach the urban disadvantaged adult?

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The scope and magnitude of problems confronting our society in large urban areas have focused attention on the "crisis of the cities." Universities and colleges have been challenged to use continuing education to help solve the array of complex urban problems.

Paramount in importance are problems associated with the large concentrations of undereducated, unemployed, or underemployed people in the cities who live at subsistence levels. The human consequences of the decaying urban conditions are growing crime rates, ever-expanding welfare roles, and frustrated behavior.

This article addresses the following questions:

1. Are there educational and training opportunities that disadvantaged residents of urban areas feel will help them relieve their specific problems?
2. Are there educational programs that:
  - a. Are especially attractive to a specific sex?
  - b. Are especially attractive to certain age groups?
3. Is there a significant relationship between age and sex and the desire for training?

## Background

The study was conducted under the auspices of the Neighborhood Continuing Education Program of Savannah, which develops, implements, and evaluates continuing education programs for residents of the formerly designated model cities program. The program is implemented through a cooperative effort of Georgia Southern College, Armstrong

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State College, Savannah State College, and the University of Georgia.

The study was funded by a grant from the Department of Health, Education and Welfare in a homogeneous 45-block area of about 6,000 residents.

From a list of residential addresses, 312 were randomly selected. From these, we obtained 120 usable interviews with heads of households and other members of the household who were 16 years or older, but not currently enrolled in school. Forty student interviewers from Armstrong College and Savannah State College were recruited and trained for the interviews.

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Responses were subdivided into: (1) age and sex of the respondent and (2) specific response patterns relative to training desires. As the data were primarily numerical, a chi-square ( $x^2$ ) analysis was used.

### **Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses were tested:

1. Generalized desire for training is positively associated with age.
2. Desire for adult basic educational training is positively associated with age and independent of sex.
3. Desire for vocational training is inversely associated with age and independent of sex.
4. Desire for family and life adjustment training is positively associated with age and independent of sex.
5. Desire for self-enjoyment training is positively associated with age and independent of sex.
6. Desire for community development programs is inversely associated with age and independent of sex.

### **Description of Respondents**

Almost 61% of the heads of households were female. Of the 95% who responded to the question of age, about 75% were at least 35 years old; the mean age of the respondents was 52 years. The average education level was 10.2 years, with a standard deviation of 3.46 years. Slightly more than 22% of those interviewed didn't respond to the question

concerning total household income, but 42% of the respondents reported less than \$3,000 income annually. Most of the 1.7% listed as unemployable were over 65 years of age and 40% of all respondents were unemployed.

## **Analysis of Training Desires**

### *General Training*

Results confirm the hypothesis that the desire for training is associated with age, but independent of sex. The training/age relationship was found to be significant at the .01 level, which suggests a relationship between desire for training and age. Seventy-three percent of respondents between 16 and 44 years of age wanted training.

### *Adult Basic Training*

Desire for adult basic training was significant at the .01 level when tested against age, but was independent of sex. This supports the hypothesis that desire for adult basic education and age are related. Of the respondents between 16 and 44 years of age, 61% desired training, while only 48% of those over 45 expressed such a desire. Twenty-nine percent of all male and 33% of all female respondents wanted basic training.

Thirty percent of all respondents within the age range 16 to 24 stated a need for basic training, but only 12% of the predominant age range (35 to 44) wanted it.

### *Vocational Training*

The relationship between desire for vocational training and age was significant at the .01 level. These results support the hypothesis that as age increases, there's likely to be less desire for vocational training. Sixty-five percent of respondents between 16 and 44 years of age desired vocational training. Regarding possible categories of training, the greatest percentage of respondents (33%) expressed an interest in training in home economics, 19% in business and office occupations, and 14% for trade and industrial occupations.

### *Family and Life Adjustment Training*

A relationship between age and the desire for family and life adjustment training was found to be significant at the .01 level. But, there was no apparent relationship between sex and a desire for training. This supports the hypothesis concerning the relationship between age, sex, and desire for training.

Results suggest that younger households are more likely to be involved in such programs as 72% between 16 and 44 years of age expressed desires for family and life adjustment training. However, 60% of those over 44 also expressed desires for similar training.

With respect to the desire for training in family and life adjustment, the distribution of responses indicates that there isn't a strong demand for one specific program like sewing, home maintenance, child care, household budgeting, nutrition, pest control, home decorating, or family planning. Therefore, it's safe to say a successful program for family and life adjustment must offer a wide variety of subjects.

#### **Self-Enjoyment Programs**

Results for self-enjoyment programs aren't as conclusive as those for other training programs. Results reveal that the relationship between age and the desire for self-enjoyment training was significant only at the .10 level, while there was an independent relationship between sex and desire for self-enjoyment training.

Eight basic categories of programs that might contribute to self-enjoyment, presented in decreasing order of importance as viewed by the respondents, are: art appreciation, literary expositions, public speaking, home improvement, music appreciation, music lessons, leadership training, and art lessons.

#### **Community Development Programs**

It became apparent that programs focusing on community development are worthy of attention. Increasing the educational level of the residents is only one aspect of improving vocational skills in disadvantaged communities. Family and life adjustment and self-enjoyment training also have a direct relevance on the lives of the respondents. Responses suggest, however, that the younger one is, the greater the desire for community development programs. Seventy-four percent of respondents between the ages of 16 and 44, and 51% of the respondents over 45, desired such programs.

Even though a relatively high level of interest in continuing education was seen, most of the neighborhood residents involved in this study are nonparticipants in educational endeavors and civic or community affairs.

Any remedial action programs designed to promote participation in educational programs should consider the following implications:

1. Continuing education and job training programs for women since more women than men expressed such an interest.
2. Programs for the elderly since most respondents were over 55 years of age.
3. Programs to upgrade skills and earning power since a vast majority of respondents had annual incomes under \$3,000. Many were unemployed because of a

lack of necessary basic skills. One-third of all respondents (employed and unemployed) expressed an interest in education and job training.

4. On-the-job training for those who need upgrading in skills, and basic education to prepare the unemployed for employment. A more systematic link between educational agencies is necessary to meet the total needs.
5. New and innovative methods of program delivery are needed to replace traditional "canned" programs. For example, using paraprofessionals on a one-to-one ratio or in small groups in working with the disadvantaged has been successful.
6. A need for counseling services to include educational and job training opportunities as an aid to solving the numerous complex problems.

### **Implications for Extension Programming**

Even though Extension doesn't have a primary responsibility for adult basic and vocational training, it's often involved in these activities. For example, in the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP), agents are reaching individuals that aren't being reached through conventional adult basic and vocational training programs. Before paraprofessionals can teach the basics of nutrition, it's often necessary to teach homemakers simple arithmetic and reading for them to be able to keep adequate records and read recipes.

The same is true in almost all phases of Extension work, as Extension staff try to meet the needs of people served. While agents aren't likely to set up classes to teach basic education, tutoring is often necessary before certain programs can be effective in areas like pesticide application, calibration of spray equipment, and fertilizer application.

#### *Upgrade Skills and Income*

Extension programs that upgrade skills and earning power are especially important in the disadvantaged community. Skills like sewing, food handling, crafts, training paraprofessionals in basic health care for the aged, adult sitter programs, clinics for the repair of small appliances, furniture refinishing, and drapery making are only a few of the skills that could be taught routinely and could provide additional income.

#### *Programs for the Elderly*

With respect to programs for the elderly, some Extension Services are training paraprofessionals to work with senior citizens in personal care and grooming, shopping wisely, and consumerism. Such programs could also provide a means of

extra income for retirees who work with shut-ins. Pre-retirement planning for the middle generation could be concerned with issues relevant to this group—decisions about moving elderly parents into nursing homes, how to handle guilt feelings associated with the care of elderly parents, communication skills, and nutrition education.

*Women's Programs*

Specially designed programs for women are needed in every community. Programs for the displaced homemaker are already in progress in many Extension programs. Development of life skills, job preparation, personal assessment, and career/life planning are programs relevant to the displaced homemaker. Other programs concerned with legal matters, such as estate planning and beginning a small business, are other options available to the Extension program planner.

*Urban Programs*

New and innovative methods of program delivery are needed, especially in the urban areas. Many working mothers don't have the time to devote to attending meetings, short courses, and the like. Increased use of the media, including radio and television, seems especially relevant in these situations. The use of teaching kits in clothing, housing, safety, home management, and child development classes are examples of innovative teaching methods that could be used on a larger scale.

Other new and innovative programs that show promise of wider acceptance include computer-assisted instructional programs for family economic decision making. For example, "Speedy Spend," a computerized program designed to provide participants with a quick overview of their family spending patterns, is being used by Extension agents on a limited basis.

RISCO is another example of an innovative program. Agents work with health agencies to make participants aware of health risks or hazards. It's a computerized program that analyzes the heart-attack-risk factor in individuals.

*Counseling*

Finally, some individuals who need counseling services may have no other contact than Extension. Referrals are sometimes appropriate. However, there are at least three areas in which Extension could expand counseling services—family, finances, and dietary counseling. For example, an agent with a background in child development may help a mother with a child problem. Family budgeting counseling is always appropriate; and when diet problems exist, agents can help individuals carry out the doctor's orders in dietary matters.

## Summary

This study highlighted possible programming opportunities for residents of a former model cities area in Savannah. The typical respondent who expressed interest in continuing education/job training was: female, over 55, and had an annual income of less than \$3,000.

*As one-third of all respondents expressed an interest in education and job training, it's recommended that programs designed to equip residents with basic, entry-level skills be initiated. Finally, there needs to be a more systematic linkage between educational agencies and the residents to provide for the most effective education and job training opportunities and employment counseling.*