



**Social Capital and Women's Support Systems:
Networking, Learning, and Surviving: New
Directions for Adult and Continuing Education,
Number 122**

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The concept of social capital goes back to the early twentieth century. Although it has sociological underpinnings, it has been primarily applied in the business arena. Increasingly, over the last two decades, there has been a proliferation of literature that proposes a broader application of the social capital concepts to individuals, communities, societies and even adult learning.

This monograph applies social capital concepts to women as adult learners in learning communities, as users of technology and as workers, and then integrates it from the perspective of adult education. We make the case that, because women tend to be more relational than men, their lives as students are integrally related to the social networks of which they are a part. We recognize that there are certain risks inherent in social capital networks and that gender bias can lead to exclusionary challenges that marginalize women as a group. On that basis, some feminist theorists have suggested that we simply eliminate the idea of social capital because of the inherent bias in the theory's underlying concepts and assumptions. Instead, we propose an integrationist approach that recognizes the relational nature of women, their historical and contemporary use of social capital networks, and the way they leverage such relationships for personal and community transformation.

This is the 122nd volume of the Jossey-Bass higher education quarterly report series *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*. Noted for its depth of coverage, *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education* is an indispensable series that explores issues of common interest to instructors, administrators, counselors, and policymakers in a broad range of adult and continuing education settings, such as colleges and universities, extension programs, businesses, libraries, and museums.

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