Financial Planners:

Educating Widows in Personal Financial Planning

By

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Abstract

Widows constitute a growing segment of the U.S. population; however, very little has been done to educate them on the basics of personal financial planning. The creation and implementation of financial planning education programs for widows can help them become more financially literate and free them from anxiety and fear. Interviews with eight financial planners and twelve of their widow clients, along with research into financial planning education programs form the basis for this paper. As a result of the above, I will suggest content, as well as delivery methods for such programs. Distinctions among the segments of widows will then be addressed. Lastly, the role of financial planners and non-profit educational institutions in these education programs will be discussed.

1. Introduction

Widows constitute a growing segment of the U.S. population; however, very little has been done to educate them on the basics of personal financial planning. Historically, women have relied on men for their financial support. Many also are conditioned to believe that they cannot competently handle money. "While this attitude toward financial dependency is changing, it remains a powerful force in America," says William L. Anthes, Ph.D., president of the National Endowment for Financial Education (NEFE) (NEFE, 2002). The creation and implementation of financial education programs for widows can help them become more financially literate and free them from this dependency.

Interviews with eight financial planners and twelve of their widow clients, along with research into financial planning education programs form the basis for this paper. As a result of the above, I will suggest content, as well as delivery methods for such programs. Distinctions among the segments of widows will then be addressed. Lastly, the role of financial planners and non-profit educational institutions in these education programs will be discussed.

2. Financial Education Content

Financial education can help a widow to increase her knowledge and reduce her stress. Says Sharon Trusty, suddenly widowed at age 48, "But I realized something important: the more information I had, the better I understood. The better I understood, the clearer things were, the more confident I was, and the easier my life would be. I knew I had to get an understanding of it all [financial matters]" (Trusty & Corkern, 1999, p. 82). Widows need an understanding of financial matters, which for Sharon came from her financial planner. Rather than present piece-meal financial education, the content of a program should step the widow through the main parts of a financial plan. Developing an adequate financial plan is critical for women, due to their longer life expectancies, greater chances of becoming widowed, and higher probabilities of ending up in a nursing home (Clark, d'Ambrosio, McDermed & Sawant, 2003). Financial planners and educators should be aware that there are barriers to financial decision making from an older person's perspective to include low financial skills level, lack of knowledge, mistrust of suppliers and psychological barriers including confidence (National Institute of Adult Continuing Education [NIACE], July 2002). The education program should assist in reducing these barriers as it informs the widow and enables her to get organized, work with a financial planner, set financial goals, evaluate cash flow, manage risk, control debt, invest wisely, reduce taxes and plan her estate. These components of a financial plan should be included in a financial education program and will be discussed in turn below.

2.1 Getting Organized

Planning without having the necessary documents and information will be a fruitless exercise for a widow. Therefore, the education program should first teach her how to find and organize financial planning information. Alexandra Armstrong and Mary Donahue in their classic book, *On Your Own: A Widow's Passage to Emotional & Financial Well-Being*, recommend this as the first step in the financial planning process, even prior to seeking a financial advisor (2006). Getting organized should involve locating important documents, creating files for the estate and the widow personally, and setting up a record keeping system for income and expenses. It should also help the widow create a list of her assets and liabilities (debts), so she can gauge her overall financial condition or net worth (asset minus liabilities). One of the financial planners interviewed specifically mentioned taking his widow client through the financial planning process, while one of the widows advises new widows to have a financial planner "do a complete review of their financial picture."

2.2 Working With a Financial Planner

Many widows will require the services of a financial planner and should therefore be informed not only about their roles, but also about how to choose a qualified planner. Women are also more inclined than men to seek professional advice (Alcon, 1999). A financial planner can help the widow pull together advice from her group of experts such as accountant, attorney, and insurance agent. The objective of this team is to assist her in making sound long-term planning decisions, as opposed to knee-jerk short-term decisions only based on part of her situation (Trusty & Corkern, 1999). Most of the interview participants, both financial planners and widows, mentioned the expectation that the financial planner would not only help them discern what needs to be done, but also serve as the coordinator to make it happen. In most cases this involved the planner not only recommending other professionals, but also going with the widow client to meet the person.

The role of the financial planner should be that of decision partner, "a reliable, trustworthy and objective advisor" available to the widow to help her make informed decisions (Trusty & Corkern, 1999, p. 99). The widows interviewed were not looking for a financial planner to tell them what to do, but to suggest alternative courses of action and let the widow decide. As one widow put it, "I don't want to be should upon." Factors mentioned by the widows as important in choosing a qualified planner were the planner's credentials, references, compensation, comprehensiveness of services, independence, and personal qualities such as level of empathy.

Over half of the women who had not yet worked with a financial planner said they would like professional financial planning help in a 1998 study conducted by the National Center on Women and Aging [NCWA]. However, more half of these same women did not know how to check a financial planner's credentials (NCWA, 1998). This shows the need to educate women on this important topic of working with and choosing a financial planner.

2.3 Setting Financial Goals

Without stated financial goals a widow will be like a rudderless ship that expends a lot of energy, but goes nowhere. The program should assist the widow to set goals that are in line with her values. Values are the "beliefs about what is important in a person's life," and form the foundation of financial goals (Brennan & O'Neill, 2004, p. 6). The financial goals should be "SMART" ones, that are **s**pecific, **m**easurable, **a**ttainable, **r**ealistic, and **t**ime-related (Brennan & O'Neill, 2004, p. 6). Focusing more on short-term goals in the education program will avoid overwhelming the already emotionally fragile widow (Colgan, 2004).

Goals stated by widows in the interviews were many and varied. However, there were some which were often mentioned. These included dealing with issues surrounding the widow's children to include college education planning and estate planning. Retirement planning was another oft-mentioned goal, and the investment of rollover funds and life insurance proceeds to help accomplish this goal. Specific short-term goals mentioned included travel, home remodeling, gifts for friends, and care of elderly parents.

2.4 Evaluating Cash Flow

Having adequate cash flow is extremely important for a widow and should be covered in detail in this financial education program. "Surviving spouses are traditionally concerned first and foremost with cash flow," state James Thomas, Jr., CFP and Hillel Katzeff, CFP, personal financial advisors to widows for over a decade (Thomas & Katzeff, 1999). This is for good reason because the poverty rate (approximately 20%) among unmarried women living alone aged 50 and older is four times the rate of married women and married men (Lee & Shaw, 2003). Managing cash flow includes knowing one's income sources, as well as setting up a budget or spending plan to control expenses. For most widows interviewed this was the number one financial objective on their minds.

2.4.1 Knowing income sources. Income sources can include Social Security, retirement plans, and investments. At the husband's death the widow's private pension benefits received from the husband's former employer will be reduced or disappear entirely, while the total income from Social Security typically drops between 33-50% (Munnell, 2004). Having adequate income is crucial to widows because the average widow lives for an additional 15-20 years after her husband's death (Anthes & Most, 2000). Social Security accounts for half or more of the income of the majority of single women age 65 and older (Rix & Beedon, 2003). Knowing ones Social Security benefits and ensuring they are accurate is extremely important for widows.

Additionally, pension income is received by 40% of age 65 and older unmarried women living alone, so making sure pension benefits are accurate is also very important (Lee & Shaw, 2003). The typical widow's pension and Social Security benefits will fall, compounding her already lower lifetime earnings and personal retirement benefits, which can be attributed to lower wages, more part-time work and fewer years in the labor force due to caregiving of children and/or parents (Munnell, 2004). This results in a severe reduction in income for the typical widow. Investment income can help the widow tremendously and will become more important should Congress reduce Social Security benefits in the future.

The need to plan income sources was mentioned by the many of the interviewees. As one widow stated, "I knew I had a sizeable amount of money. I didn't know how far it was going to stretch." A financial planner explained how he methodically worked through the cash flow issues with his widow client to enable her to understand her income. This takes a lot of effort, as he mentioned, "We spend five times more time talking about cash flow and how to handle cash management than we ever do investment philosophy."

2.4.2 *Creating a budget or spending plan.* Establishing and living by a budget is important, so the education program should assist the widow in creating a realistic budget and provide her tools to manage it. Expenses to focus on for those aged 65 and older are health care and cash contributions because they spent more total dollars on these categories than other age groups (U.S. Department of Labor, 2000). The aged 65 and older group also spent a larger *percentage* of their income before taxes on cash contributions, health care, food at home, transportation, and utilities (U.S. Department of Labor, 2000). Therefore, managing these expenses should be given special consideration in the financial education content, especially health care costs to one of its major components, prescription drugs. This information will be well worth it for a widow because living within one's means is a key to aging well, according to a National Center on Women and Aging 2002 national poll of women age 50+ (NCWA, November 2002).

Creating a budget as part of the cash management plan was very important to the widows interviewed. One financial planner stated, "Our immediate concerns were how are we going to pay the bills?" Controlling spending was important to most widows. Having someone like a financial planner helping them to do so was of great benefit. As explained by one widow, my financial planner would "question my spending…because that's another thing that gets you in trouble when all this stuff happens to you. You find yourself spending everything you can because being out shopping helps kind of ease some of it."

2.5 Managing Risk

Risk management includes having adequate insurance coverages, as well as avoiding consumer fraud. Topics to be coverage under insurance should be automobile, homeowners or renters, disability, health, life and long-term care. Probably the most important of these insurances and the one most women are least knowledgeable about is long-term care insurance. This type of insurance can help pay expenses for home health care, assisted living and nursing home care. In 1990, 70% of nursing home residents were women, half of whom were age 85 and over (National Institute on Aging, 1997). This percentage will only increase as baby boomers age, making long-term care insurance an increasing important topic for women, particularly widows. The majority (63%) of female baby boomers in a 2000 study commissioned by GE Center for Financial Learning [GE] stated that when the time came that they needed long term care, they would rely on their spouses to take care of them (GE, 2004). Unfortunately, 59% of women over age 65 will not have a spouse to take care of them due to widowhood, divorce and their longer life span (GE, 2004).

Managing risk also includes educating widows so they will avoid confidence swindles, scams, identity theft and other types of consumer fraud. Because probate estates are public information, it is very easy for unscrupulous people to find out names of widows and their contact information. Elder victims of confidence swindles have been shown to primarily be single white females, age 65-79, who live alone and are not employed outside the home (Friedman, 1992). Widows can be vulnerable to pressure from opportunists or financial solicitors, which may even include members of their own family (NEFE, 2001). Educating widows in this area can increase their sense of internal control and self-efficiency and enable them to be less susceptible to financial mismanagement or exploitation (Into, 2003).

Many widows mentioned how they felt in a “fog” or like they “had a stroke” emotionally after their husband died. They knew they were in no condition to handle their own financial affairs, and also that they were vulnerable to bad or worse, unethical, advice. They advised new widows to seek out a trustworthy financial planner immediately in order to avoid making bad decisions or succumbing to fraud as stated above. Asking friends for references was the most often mentioned method of doing this. One widow also mentioned that she would not have spent so much of her inheritance if she had gone to a financial planner sooner. The primary risk management issues mentioned involved health insurance. Many widows were left with substantial medical bills resulting from their husband's condition before death. Added to that was the issue of health insurance coverage for the widow and in many cases, her children.

2.6 Controlling Debt

Debt management includes establishing a good credit history, using credit wisely, being aware of predatory lenders, and knowing one's rights and where to get help. End-of-life medical and funeral/burial expenditures for a deceased spouse typically account for a large share (over 63%) of the household's current annual income (Fan & Zick, 2004). This either reduces the widow's assets or increases her debt, or both. Dealing with the financial and emotional implications of this should be a priority in a financial education program. While women are less likely to carry debt on large items, they are more likely than men to carry consumer debt (Alcon, 1999). Therefore, making the widow aware of predatory lenders who make false promises and then trap the widow in a loan with high fees, usurious interest rates, and unfavorable terms, should be part of any financial education program. Lastly, providing the widow strategies to reduce debt and eventually become debt free will provide her many financial and emotional benefits in the future.

Most of the widows interviewed had substantial assets and few debt problems. However, that could easily change for many of them without financial education and cash flow planning. Due to the tendency to overspend after their husband's death a widow could easily find herself in a high debt situation. This is especially true for the widow whose income is not sufficient to cover her expenses, as was the case with most of the widows interviewed. They required professional planning help in order to create income from their investment portfolio and life insurance proceeds.

2.7 Investing Wisely

Wise investing includes knowing one's risk tolerance, setting appropriate strategies, and utilizing the best investment vehicles. Saving and investing are important topics for a widow because women do not save as much as men, nor plan as well for retirement (Alcon, 1999). Divorced, separated and widowed women have been shown to have the lowest amount of savings among demographic groups (Glass & Kilpatrick, 1998). Therefore, upon entering widowhood they will likely have fewer investments, but these investments will need to last them a longer time than the average male or widower.

A NCWA study found that while women tended to have a low risk tolerance, the range varied significantly due to age, education and income (1998). Teaching widows how to measure their risk tolerance is important, as is informing them about investment strategies such as diversification. Women correctly answered only 43% of questions on diversification and risk in the 1998 NCWA study. They are in need of guidance on diversification as they also concentrated their savings into low-risk investments (Glass & Kilpatrick, 1998). Such investments are not appropriate for long-term goals due to the negative impact of inflation.

In addition, the majority of women surveyed were not knowledgeable about their investment options, so basic knowledge of investment alternatives or vehicles should be discussed as part of the education program (NCWA, 1998). Lastly, not only are women less likely to take risk and less informed on investment vehicles, but they are also more anxious than men about their investments (Dreyfus, 1998). Adding an investment section to the financial education content can help to reduce this anxiety.

Obtaining wise investment advice was of utmost importance to most widows. One of their top concerns was how to best manage their inheritance to meet their cash flow requirements, and how to invest the cash received from life insurance policies. Having a diversified portfolio that gave them a sense of safety and security was also important. As one widow stated, “I need someone to help me. I don’t want to do it myself.”

2.8 Reducing Taxes

Types of taxes the widow should be familiar with include federal estate tax, state death taxes, state inheritance taxes, and federal and state income taxes. Teaching her how to find an experienced enrolled agent or CPA is important, especially if she has complicating financial matters such as business interests, partnerships, numerous investment accounts, multiple income sources and investment income such as interest, dividends and capital gains (Latko, 2003). As mentioned by numerous widows interviewed the financial planner plays an important role in assisting the widow to find a knowledgeable tax accountant, and even accompanying her to meetings. The planners also helped the widows in cash flow management and how to plan for payment of applicable death and income taxes. Finally, educating the widow to enable her to plan her own estate and pass on as much to her children as possible was an important expectation the widows placed on their financial planners.

2.9 Planning Her Estate

Proper estate planning for the widow necessitates knowledge about legal documents such as a will, prenuptial agreement, trust, general durable POA, durable medical POA, and living will, as well as proper beneficiary designations. Updating the widow’s will is very important because in most states the death of her husband will invalidate her previous will (NEFE, 2002). Prenuptial agreements are important for widows considering remarriage at some point in the future. They are especially applicable for a widow who has children, assets over $100,000, or owns a business interest or partnership (Hannon, 1998). One widow in my study specifically mentioned the benefit of having her financial planner educate her and help her to create an appropriate prenuptial agreement. Checking beneficiaries to insure they are renamed on all insurance policies, retirement accounts, and any other financial accounts is also an important step the widow should be informed of in the education program (NEFE, 2002). This was particularly important to those widows interviewed who had young children.

In order for a financial education program to truly benefit a widow it should focus time on each of the above topics to include informing and enabling the widow to get organized, work with a financial planner, set financial goals, evaluate cash flow, manage risk, control debt, invest wisely, reduce taxes and plan her estate. However, content alone is not enough. Attention must be given to appropriate delivery methods. This will be discussed next.

3. Financial Education Delivery Methods

Transitional moments such as being widowed provide a prime opportunity to educate women about financial issues (NEFE, October 2000). Financial education delivery methods range from brochures and books to formal, accredited classroom instruction. Educational formats that allow active participation and personalized materials may be most effective in helping women learn and apply financial knowledge (Montalto, 2004). A 1997 Gender Study by Dreyfus Corporation confirmed that more women than men prefer personalized attention with finances (Dreyfus, 1998). Providing generic information in writing is the least effective method of financial literacy education, while providing frequent, specific, individualized training in a personal way is most effective (Todd, 2002). As well, it has been shown that outcomes improve when training is delivered face to face such as in a classroom or one-on-one instruction (Todd, 2002). The widows I interviewed specifically appreciated the one-on-one instruction provided by their financial planners. Women age 60+ prefer non-vocational, non-accredited courses over vocational, accredited courses, and prefer to take them in the daytime, as opposed to evening (NIACE, December 2002). Finally, in a study performed by the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, older adults (aged 45 and above) and females were more likely to choose informational seminars over formal courses, radio programs, videos/cd-roms/dvds and the Internet for delivery of financial information (Rhine & Toussaint-Comeau, 2002).

A workshop format for seminars may be the best approach for educating widows on financial planning. A follow-up participant survey of the nationwide Women's Financial Information Program (WFIP) workshops showed women became more knowledgeable and acquired practical tips and guidelines from the workshops (Kinney & Goebel, 1995). Most participants also reported having a more positive attitude toward managing finances as a result of the workshops (Kinney & Goebel, 1995). According to Verelyn Gibbs-Jones, director of marketing services for women's markets at New York Life Insurance Company, workshops are an effective approach to financial education for women due to their interactive, personalized nature (Gibbs-Jones, 2005). The workshop should be fun, as well as enriching, and provide time for group activities (Tompkins, 2003).

Another alternative would be to incorporate financial workshops into widow support groups. A five week widow support group was shown to increase support satisfaction, diminish support need and increase positive affect (Stewart, Craig, MacPherson & Alexander, 2001). Positive affects included enhanced confidence and hope and a greater sense of competence and self-esteem (Stewart, et al., 2001). This format may also lend itself to mentoring. Mentoring by a peer who would serve as a role model and speak at clinics or small groups was suggested as a method for teaching women money management (NEFE, October 2000; NIACE, July 2002). One widow interviewed mentioned how important it was to her that her financial planner recommended a widow support group. She is still active in it years later as a mentor to new widows. These mentors should be peers from groups in which the widows normally associate such as churches, job-training programs, etc. (NEFE, October 2000). As an example, AARP has successfully run a well-respected mentoring program called the Widowed Persons Service (National Center on Women & Aging, Winter 2002).

Lastly, distance education using the computer can be a viable method for widows, particularly younger widows who are computer literate. A 1998 study of distance education courses using computer conferencing found that women in such courses were able to meet their primary connection needs and develop intimacy and interdependency (Gougeon, 1998). However, this should be tempered with the finding that while females are more likely than males to participate in postcompulsory education activities, they are less likely than males to participate in technology-based activities (National Center for Education Statistics, 2003). Women are also less likely than men (17% versus 25%) to use computer software for saving and investment guidance (Albertson, 2000).

Regardless of the format utilized, a successful financial education program should be tailored to the target audience's language, culture, age and experience (U.S. Treasury Department, Office of Financial Education, 2004). A financial education program should be developed in the social context in which the widows live and encourage participants to examine their cultural imprinting and stereotyping, (NEFE, October 2000). Therefore, I will discuss the segments of widows that financial education providers should consider next.

4. Distinctions among Widow Segments

Widows can be distinguished by age, economic status, and cultural background, among other factors. Ideally, any financial education program would be custom-tailored to the specific group of widows targeted. Widows are often referenced as younger (below age 35), mid-life (age 35-55), and older (over age 55).   The number of widows, according to the U.S. Census

Bureau as of January 2003, include 119,000 younger widows, 959,000 mid-life widows, and 10,219,000 older widows (Fields, 2003). Fully 77% of widows are age 65 and older, while 52% of widows are age 75 and older (Fields, 2003). Almost half (46%) of women aged 65 and over in 2002 were widows (Administration on Aging, 2003). Due to the generational differences these age groups possess I will discuss each one of them in turn.

4.1 Younger Widows

Younger widows tend to be less risk averse and more financially literate at an earlier age than older widows (Alcon, 1999; NEFE, November, 2000). They bear a greater responsibility for funding and investment decisions regarding retirement due to the shift to defined contribution plans by employers and Social Security reform (Alcon, 1999). They are also at greatest risk for economic hardship after widowhood due to duration of widowhood being directly related to future poverty (Sevak, Weir & Willis, 2003). They are often left in greater shock and deeper resentment with less support and fewer role models than older widows (Elefant, 1989). As a result, they often act out this bitterness by indulging in spending sprees (Elefant, 1989). These young widows need financial planning education to help them set spending plans, consider estate planning and life insurance to protect their young children and deal with the issues related to remarriage.

4.2 Mid-life Widows

Compared to older widows, mid-life widows tend to be more financially savvy, but carry more debt as well (NEFE, November 2000). They can often be found caring for children and aging parents and have blended families (NEFE, November 2000). They both love money and are fearful of it, but like to focus on personal relevance (NEFE, November 2000). They are often faced with financial challenges due to inadequate health insurance for those whose husbands died from illness (Scannell-Desch, 2005). They may also have inadequate life insurance to cover a home mortgage and children's college expenses (Scannell-Desch, 2005). A mid-life widow often worries about finding higher paying employment to help replace lost income from her late husband (Scannell-Desch, 2005). Lastly, they risk entering poverty due to ineligibility for Social Security benefits until age 60, unless there is a dependent child under age 16 still at home (Sevak, et al., 2003).

Most of the widows I interviewed fell into this age category. They were in shock at having lost their husband at such a young age. As a result, they were very concerned about both their immediate cash flow and their future financial independence. Many of them still had children at home or in college, and a few of them were also caregivers for their elderly parents or parents-in-law. By educating these widows on cash flow issues and assisting them in their own retirement and estate planning, their financial planners were able to reduce their stress and increase their "peace of mind."

4.3 Older Widows

These women are usually far less financially literate and aware compared to other generations (NEFE, November 2000). They have historically relied on men for financial support and many have been "conditioned to believe that they cannot competently handle money," and have therefore left managing money to someone else (Anthes & Most, 2000, p. 130; Alcon, 1999). Compounding this factor is the issue that they typically have less income and less wealth than younger widows (Alcon, 1999). Older widows can be profoundly uncomfortable and unprepared to manage money (Alcon, 1999). As a result, they fear they'll run out of money because now they are dependent solely on themselves (Chesler, 2003).

Not only do widows differ by age, but they also differ greatly in economic status. This is related to a number of factors. For example, the greater the duration of widowhood, the greater the likelihood of the widow ending up in poverty (Sevak, et al., 2003). Women who were poor prior to widowhood are more likely to continue in poverty after widowhood (Sevak, et al., 2003). Also, a woman widowed in her 50's is more likely to end up in poverty due to non-receipt of Social Security benefits until age 60 and the loss of potential retirement savings and pension accrual from her deceased husband (Sevak, et al., 2003). There are few options for the above women to improve their economic status. As a result, widowhood remains an important risk factor for transition into poverty, even though the percent of new widows going into poverty after widowhood has declined from 37% in the 70's to 12-15% in the 90's (Sevak, et al., 2003).

Some of the widows interviewed were in this age group. They tended to be less technologically and financially savvy than the younger widows. They also were more likely to be homemakers than their younger counterparts. As a result, education was far more important for them, particularly in increasing their comfort level with their financial situation and future cash flow. As one of the financial planners stated, "Educate, educate, educate." It is a continual process with these women, but the planners saw positive results both in the widow's financial understanding and also her sense of security and peace of mind.

Lastly, widows differ based on cultural background. Minority women age 65 and older living alone have poverty rates over twice that of white women living alone (Lee & Shaw, 2003). Additionally, white women age 65 and older are more than twice as likely to receive income from assets than African Americans or Hispanics (Lee & Shaw, 2003). The National Women's 2005 Retirement Survey sponsored by the Heinz Family Philanthropies and the Women's Institute for a Secure Retirement found that many women of color, particularly African-American and Hispanic, have great concerns about retirement savings and expect to continue to work indefinitely (Heinz Family Philanthropies, 2005). The situation for widowed minority women is certainly bleaker than for the typical white widow.

5. Role of the Financial Planner

The private sector is the key to successfully educating widows. Without the involvement of financial planners, there would not be enough qualified instructors for the workshops suggested above. Certified financial planners will not only have the necessary financial knowledge, but may also have extensive experience serving widows. This enables them to better lead seminars and workshops due to their personal experience in helping widows manage their finances. One of the keys for financial planners would be to not assume that a self-assured, successful widow is in fact financially literate or confident in her financial skills (Alcon, 1999). This was glimpsed in the study. One of the widows was a very successful physician, but relied heavily on her financial planner for cash flow and investment advice.

Because financial stress is found to increase social interaction shortly after a spouse's death, recent widows may be motivated to attend a workshop put on by a financial planner if invited by a friend or family member (Van Baarsen & Van Groenou, 2001). Per the responses to the study, a widow would be unlikely to attend such an event, or trust the financial planner apart from a recommendation from a trusted friend or family member. The financial planner should not only seek to provide the widow with a personalized financial plan, but also provide her reassurance and sympathy (Colgan, 2004). A financial planner who was both empathetic to their situation and also reassuring was mentioned as highly important by almost every widow. Younger and mid-life widows may already be inclined to attend a financial workshop according to a study conducted by the Employee Benefit Research Institute, the American Savings Education Council and Matthew Greenwald & Associates. They found that 62% of working-age women seek the advice of a financial professional when making saving and investment decisions versus only 49% of working-age men (Albertson, 2000).

6. Support by Non-profit Educational Institutions

Support of such workshops by non-profit educational institutions is crucial for their success. Creating a series of educational workshops for local financial planners to implement takes time, knowledge and money. Left to themselves and their own resources, few financial planners will expend the effort to create these workshops for widows. However, if provided with a turn-key solution by a non-profit educational institutions, many financial planners might participate in leading such workshops in their local area. Financial planners who are willing to give of their time to teach personal finance principles to people in their community are what have made Jump$tart and NEFE's high school financial planning program so successful.

Non-profit institutions have the necessary knowledge and expertise to create such workshops. For example, AARP created and sponsored the Women's Financial Information Program (WIFP) that was implemented through many of the land grant university cooperative extensions throughout the nation until recently. NEFE and AARP co-sponsored a conference in 2000 titled "Women and Money Program Incubator" to address the crucial financial issues facing women in the U.S. (NEFE, February 2002). NEFE also sponsored a national meeting on financial psychology and lifechanging events in 2001, which included discussion of becoming suddenly single (NEFE, 2001). There are many more nonprofit institutions like AARP and NEFE that have the expertise and knowledge, and the ability to attract the best minds on the subject of widows and financial planning.

These institutions also have the funding to create a turn-key financial education program for widows. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (USDA-CSREES) has published a list of 17 regional and 28 nationwide non-profit institutions that fund personal finance research and education throughout the U.S. (USDA-CREES, 2005). By funding the creation of financial education programs for widows, these institutions could have a nationwide impact on widow's lives through the local implementation of the program by financial planners. Unfortunately, my research of financial education programs showed that there are presently no such national programs in the U.S., and those that were once going such as AARP's WIFP are no longer being provided.

7. Conclusion

Widows need personal financial planning education. Unfortunately, there are no national financial education programs specifically oriented to this growing segment of our population. Programs need to be created that include appropriate content that is then delivered via effective methods. "Perfunctory, superficial, unenlightened efforts will not adequately address their needs, nor enhance their financial security" (Anthes & Most, 2000, p. 142). In order to avoid these types of efforts, consideration should be give to the generational, economic and cultural differences among segments of widows. Lastly, for these efforts to be successful, support from local financial planners and nationwide non-profit educational institutions is crucial. My hope is that such programs are created and implemented, and as a result, many widows are freed from emotional and financial bondage.

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