



Women in Focus

Survey 2009-2010

Meaningful Connections

By

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Introduction:

There are commonalities that all women share in the embrace of community as it unfolds inside or outside of the church. However, due to various stage of life, exposure to different “cultures” in context of one generation to the next there will be differences of outlook, approach and interpretation of the day to day. Each generation will have its unique approach with which it will embrace community life and the pursuing of connectedness with it.

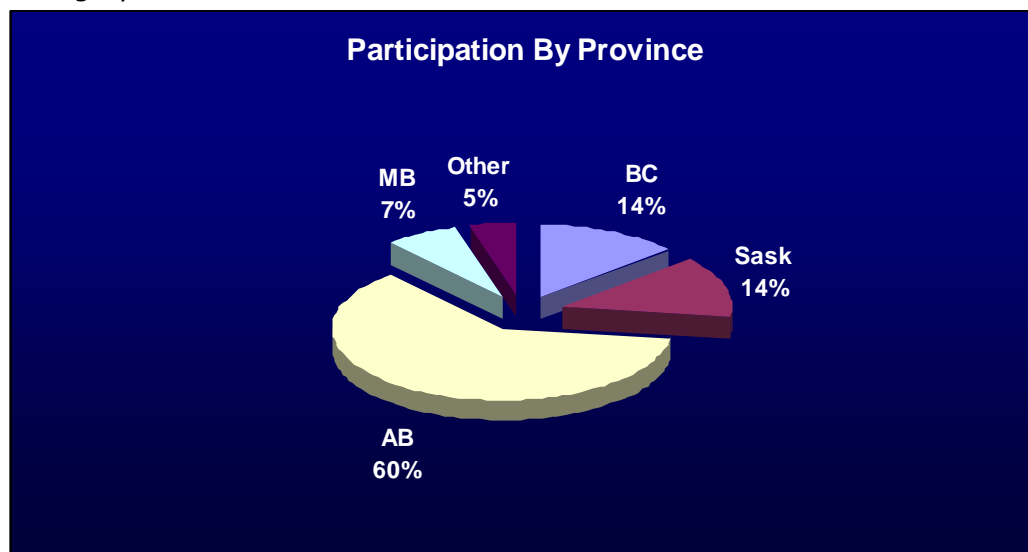
This survey was undertaken to gain some insights into the interests and needs that younger women have in building/developing meaningful connections with one another both within and outside of the church context. The goal is to enable WIF to develop some sensitivity and insight into those needs in order to support, encourage and reach out to younger women in context of all women in a meaningful way.

We undertook this task by collecting feedback thru a survey that was distributed via person to person contact. Most of the surveys were handed out to women attending the Gifted and Called workshops. A smaller number of surveys were randomly given to women in other settings such as bible studies, fellow church goers or participants at other retreats/workshops. The following is a distillation of the main findings of the survey. The full report is also available. The total number of surveys collected was 220. Thank you for your hearty participation!

General Observations:

Looking at the provinces we found the following:

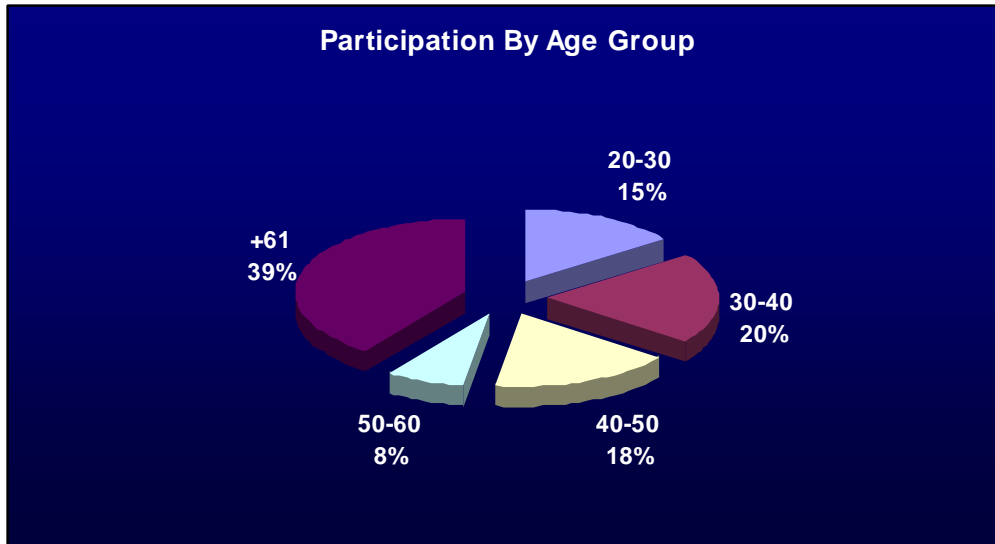
- Two were collected from outside of Canada (foreign students residing in Canada)
- Twenty were collected from Manitoba
- Forty were collected from British Columbia
- Seventy three were collected from Saskatchewan
- Eighty five were collected from Alberta



Looking at the age groups we found the following:

- Ages 20-30 had a total of 44 participants

- Ages 30-40 had a total of 25 participants
- Ages 40-50 had a total of 37 participants
- Ages 50-60 had a total of 31 participants
- Ages 61+ had a total of 83 participants



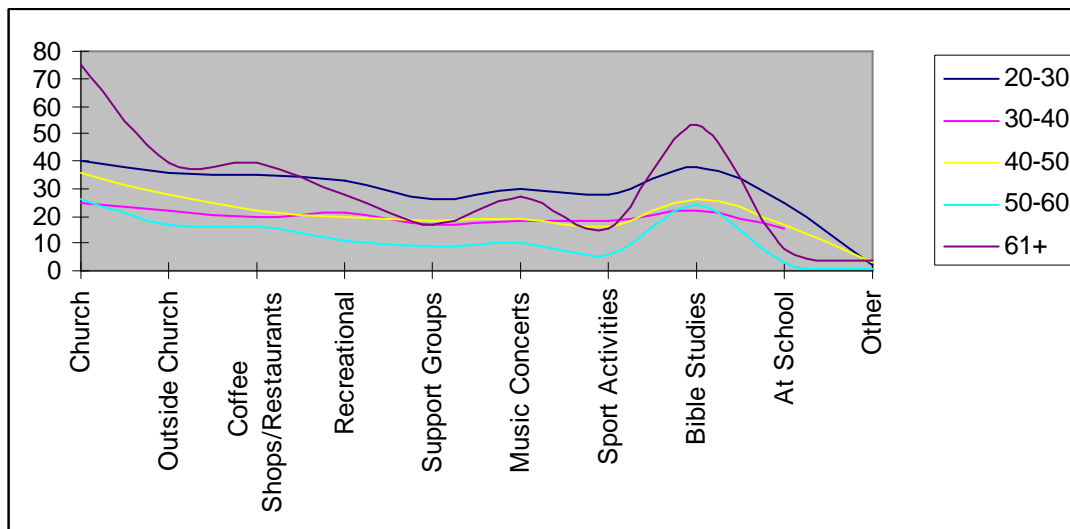
Age Group Participation - the largest number of participants in this survey was represented by the 60+ age group and most of these participants came from Saskatchewan. The second largest age group represented was the 30-40 age group and these came from Alberta.

Key Findings:

This summary focuses on three main areas that came to the forefront with this survey. These are Location, Reason, and Activities.

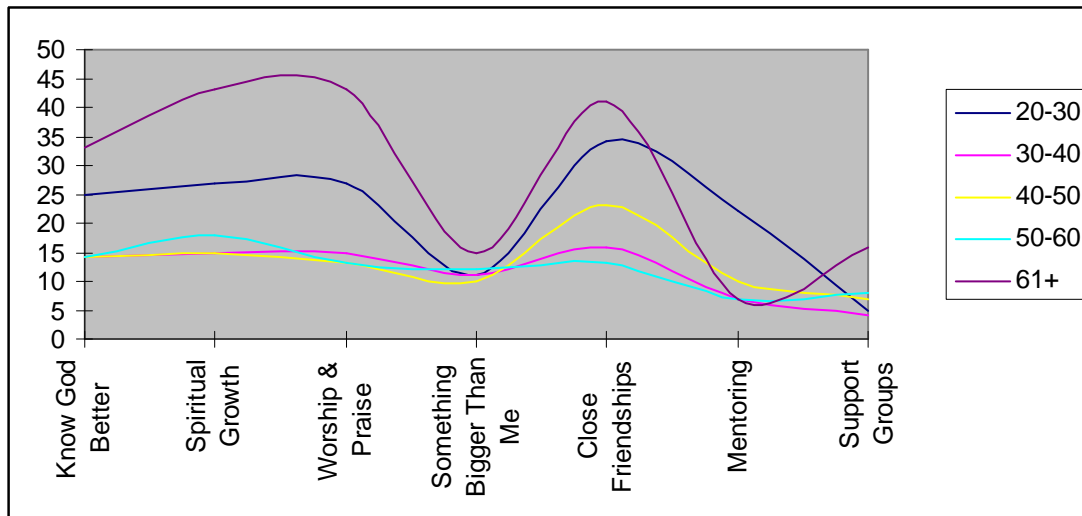
Location

Where is it that we seem to best connect with one another? The survey indicates that Bible Studies and Church were chosen as the most desired place for meeting and connecting. It is also important to point out that this was the same for the younger and older age groups.



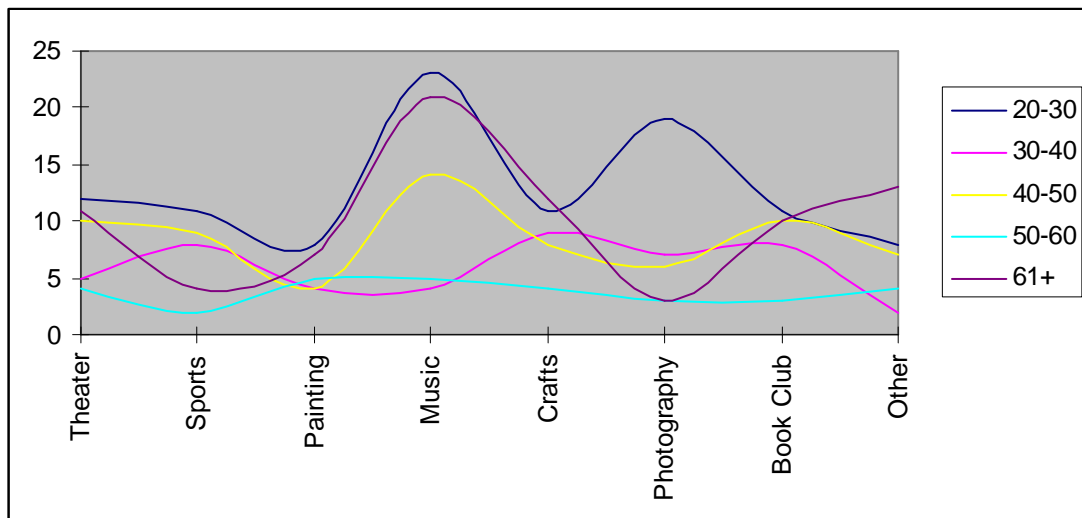
Reasons

What are the reasons we are drawn to be more connected with one another? Spiritual Growth, Worship and Praise, and Close Friendship were chosen to be the most significant motivators for building deeper connections with one another. Again, this is similar in the younger and older age groups. It is also important to note that the younger age group listed Mentoring more often than the other age groups.



Activities

What would a sampling of some of the activities that bring us together look like? The activities chosen for this survey were meant to be representative of a range in terms of physical, artistic, intellectual, and more passive activities that might be attractive to specific age groups. The survey found that music had the highest score which correlates closely to Worship and Praise in the chart above.



Summary:

It is important to point out that the survey may have a certain bias because of the distribution method we used. The majority of participants were committed, engaged and motivated women that participated in the Gifted and Called workshops.

Another observation is that many of the participants in this survey have attended church for 15 plus years and are usually active in some volunteer activity or ministry at church. As such, this group of women might be more comfortable with a "traditional" church community and, therefore, a more traditional church view.

The women that seem to be missing from this survey are those who have not attended church for very long or who are more active in ministries that are not directly church related.

Each generation has a different outlook and sometimes even a different paradigm of how each views their world. It is easy for a lack of awareness and information to exist from one generation to the next. A sincere effort to understand the "language" of the other generation is critical for all generations to forge deeper connections. The door must remain open to continued dialogue.

"If I could ask for other adults to give one freedom to younger people that they really respect and value, it would be the freedom to sometimes be able to say, 'You don't get it.' And even if you don't agree with them, just let them explain why they think you don't get it. Because there is a reason. It's not because we've come to the table wanting to be critical of people who are older." Earl Creps, Reverse Mentoring, 2008.

As we seek to build trust and appreciation towards one another, we must remember that change is taking place at such a rapid rate in our culture. This affects how we relate towards each other, but I believe the key is an openness to dialogue within each faith community as its members seek to serve one another in the love of Christ.

The following email was received by one of the young women when asked what she perceives as is important when younger and older women seek to come together to forge deeper connections. In her own words ...

"Generations have been shaped (spiritually, psychologically, and even physically) by their geography and season in history. This shaping runs deep and simply cannot be 'put on' or fully 'understood' by another generation. You see this even across professions/disciplines in life (can a professional dancer understand a professional accountant? not that one couldn't be both, but I think you can get the general idea). Cross generation relating, empathy and support can happen, and should, thankfully, happen, but we can't be what we're not. And that's ok and good:). The focus is on the relating, empathy, support and new life (as we see in businesses and cross functioning teams). And interestingly, it's in the midst of this meeting the new is birthed, and sometimes radically new (we see this especially in design and technology, i.e. Apple). But this focus can only occur in shared space. And allowing this shared space of creativity be creative (and God said, "Let there be"..."vast array"..."saw it was good"). And creativity involves trust, freedom and play (it is not by might). There is trust in the acknowledged sacredness and unknown of the other and that God is victor, at work, leading and enjoying, freedom to be who God is creating us to be (within our own



generation if speaking in terms of generation), and the play of relating with "others." This is good news. For the older generation it means the venue and way may be different, but please bring the gift of the wealth of the story God has been and is telling through your life, and bring the gifts God has given you for when we meet. For the younger generation it means hear that God is the same yesterday, today AND tomorrow, though your venues and ways are changing, though what remains the same for you is change. The center is the joy and fruit of obedience to meeting together and generations "remembering" and "telling" (this is clear in Scripture). God's Word will not return to Him void.

In short, my sense is be creative. Have fun being creative. Creativity means getting messy, trying and failing, trying and discovering, trying and oh, wow, look...this is good. Expect God to show up and create in your meeting. And whatever is created may change again sooner than later. The point isn't a program, the point is allowing the opportunity, creating the space for the possibility to encounter God personally and collectively, to know Him more intimately, and to respond to His call, and see something new (and yet the same...it's paradoxical). God knows what this is:)...and however big or very, very small, it's God's creation (in us, through us or around us) in which we're blessed to witness His love and glory."