

An Update on Adult Development Theory: New Ways of Thinking about Life Course. M. Clark and R. Caffarella (Eds.). (1999). Jossey-Bass (www.JosseyBass.com)

The editors' stated purpose for this volume is to enable professionals who work with adults to stay current with the advances in literature regarding how adults change and develop across the life span. The underlying structure for the book is the four-part typology of Merriam and Caffarella (1999), consisting of biological, psychological, socio-cultural, and integrative models of development. Major topics in each of these areas that address different dimensions of development were identified. Authors of chapters were invited to explore, review, discuss, and assess the implications of the topic for the profession. The book is presented in five sections, which are not identified as sections, other than in the editors' notes.

Chapter 1, *Theorizing Adult Development*, is written by the editors regarding the whole process of theorizing about adult development and to explain the typology of developmental theories used as the framework for this volume. The concept of adult development (and adulthood) is evolving and changing from condition to process and understanding the process is the focus of developmental theory.

Chapter 2, *Our Complex Human Body: Biological Development Explored*, by V. Mott, examines the complex process of human development—aging—from a variety of perspectives. Theories only bring more questions about the aging process. Are biological changes inevitable? Can we slow down the process? What role does the environment play? The author discusses new perspectives on aging, especially theories regarding mind-body connections. The implications for adult educators and adult learners are that people are living longer, feeling better, and are returning to the classroom for professional and personal reasons.

Chapter 3, *Psychological Development: Becoming a Person*, by P. Reeves, presents theories that provide a broad conceptual lens through which to view the journey to adulthood. The stage-phase theory of Erik Erikson (1959) is hierarchical, with an eight-stage model of development stretching from birth to death. He posited that people who have satisfactorily addressed all previous life stages are able to approach the end of life with the ability to accept themselves as they are. Levinson (1986) moved a step further by identifying a relatively orderly

sequence of periods during the adult years that are age linked. He called the periods *structure building* and *structure changing*. He identified four eras, three of which occur in adulthood: early adulthood, middle adulthood, and late adulthood. Schlossberg (1984) discussed life events and transitions, and defined transitions as anticipated events, unanticipated events, and non-events that alter lives and provide the opportunity to learn and to grow. Bridges (1991), too, viewed life changes as a catalyst for development. His perspective was process oriented and he viewed each transition as having three stages: ending, neutral zone, and new beginning. Reeves reported there are other theories that argue classical theories only fit certain individuals, research is on-going in psychological development of women, and research continues regarding contextual or environmental factors in the development process. The author concluded that theories of adult development provide a cognitive “road map for the journey.”

The socio-cultural perspectives of adult development follow in the next three chapters: Chapter 4, Gender Development and Gendered Adult Development, by J. Ross-Gordon; Chapter 5, Racial and Ethnic Identity and Development, by A. Chavez; and Chapter 6, The Development of Sexual Identity, by K. Edwards. The discussion in all three chapters focuses on the effects that identity issues can have on relationships with others in a learning environment.

The editors believe integrative perspectives offer the most promising ways for capturing the intricacies of how we grow and develop as adults. Four perspectives are discussed in chapters 7–10: separation and connection, time, narrative, and spiritual.

Chapter 7, Development as Separation and Connection: Feeling, explores issues of separation associated with aging. According to Erikson (1959), separation precedes connection, and a separate identity is essential for healthy connection to be achieved. Gilligan (1982), in her work on women’s moral development, argued that identity is not forged separate from others, but is a process that proceeds in connection with others. Bergman and Surrey (1997), of the Stone Center at Wellesley, proposed another model: women’s “growth in connection.” For Kegan (1994), the crucial issue is how we construct the self that desires interpersonal intimacy. He described development as a process of transformation of consciousness throughout the life span and incorporates both separation and connection as fundamental to the development process.

Chapter 8, Time as the Integrative Factor, by S. Merriam, puts adult development in the context of “time.” Historical time is defined as that which is happening and influences the life course, life time is based on a person’s chronological time, and social time is divided into periods of life with certain expectations—a socially prescribed time table. The author states, “The construct of time becomes a window through which we can better understand changes people make in their behaviors, attitudes, values and meaning making.”

In Chapter 9, Understanding Adult Development as Narrative, by M. Rossiter, the author discusses aspects of a narrative orientation to development and outlines four qualities of narrative that are essential to understanding: contextual, interpretive, retrospective, and temporal. Narrative development focuses on meaning changes and events over the life course. Four points are made from this understanding:

1. Learners are experts on their own development.
2. Narratives mediate change.
3. The telling of life narrative leads to development.
4. Adults re-story their lives in the process of transformative learning.

Chapter 10, The Spiritual Dimension of Adult Development, Psychological and Cultural Aspects of Spirituality, by E. Tisdell, draws attention to the spiritual aspects of aging. The author believes adult educators should realize that spirituality in our lives is connected to the search for

meaning; secondly, students bring their spirituality with them; third, creativity stems from spirituality; fourth, spirituality is an aspect of our socio-cultural background; and finally, spirituality is the grounding place for emancipatory educators.

In Chapter 11, the editors discuss the current state of the profession and focus on the integrative mode that currently dominates the literature. They conclude there has been a shift in the literature on adult development toward thinking about development in a more integrative way. Scholars are acknowledging the importance of incorporating elements of other theories, which is leading to a more holistic view of adult development.

Adult development theory is vital to a vibrant therapeutic recreation practice. This volume speaks to the various roles in the profession—from working with troubled teens to providing quality of life to residents in long term care facilities. The literature described in this volume offers meaningful and rewarding theories on which to base our practice and a better understanding of the clients we serve.

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