

EDITOR'S NOTES

Have you heard the one about the rabbi, the priest, and the head of the Greek Orthodox church? Imagine a class of adult learners that has all three. And then add in a Saudi Arabian woman taking her first class in the United States, which is also the first time she has been in a classroom with men. And just to mix things up a bit more, add in a teacher who is in the process of deciding what to do with the rest of her life.

This scenario is true. In fact, every adult class has such a mix of individuals—all coming to the learning experience with their own perspectives, needs, and developmental stages—and every classroom is a cauldron for change and growth. This volume looks closely at the process of change that will express itself in new learning, shifts in the construction of knowledge, and personal meaning making. Virtually anyone who reflects, “Where was I eight years ago? What was I working on?” will be reminded of the different place and scenery of a task accomplished, a problem resolved, a change that had to occur. This is the terrain of adulthood.

One of the many surprises about the life span perspective is that individuals, families, institutions, and corporations lead many lives. The purpose of this volume is to acquaint and update practitioners in adult education and related roles with emerging and creative methods of appreciating the learner’s perspective, moderating content and learning format to enhance meaning making in the learning environment, and developing tools to address alternative modes of development and growth that occur in adulthood that challenge adult educators on a daily basis.

This volume explores dimensions of adult development from both a research and a theoretical perspective. It addresses adult learners’ experience and meaning of education as an ongoing resource for well-being and positive development across the life course.

Chapter One lays the groundwork for understanding the theoretical and research underpinnings related to transitions in adulthood. Sharan B. Merriam updates the reader on the emerging terrain of adulthood. In Chapter Two, Mary-Jane Eisen considers how adult learning philosophies are implemented and modified to meet the adult’s developmental mandate to continue learning in order to make meaning and find purpose during the countless transitions of the adult years.

Chapter Three presents a model of well-being for adult learners who must change and yet remain true to their own cultures and relationships. Jan D. Sinnott confronts the need for transition and explores ways for learners to connect with new cognitive and affective meanings. Chapter Four looks at how adult education can respond to the emerging needs of Latina and Latino adult learners. Lorrie Greenhouse Gardella, Barbara A. Candales, and José Ricardo-Rivera present a culturally sensitive model for adult edu-

cation based on relational cultural theory, systems perspectives, and Latino studies. Research and examples are drawn from the experiences of Puerto Rican and Latina/Latino adult students in an urban college setting.

In Chapter Five, Mary Alice Wolf further examines learners' internal processes of differentiation and integration. This chapter, rooted in life span developmental research and theory, explores domains of subjective well-being: emotional, social, and psychological. It asks: What is the impact of these domains on the learner's experience of education? It also invites readers to consider implications for classroom interventions and strategies that promote opportunity for shifts in meaning making. Chapter Six brings us into the world of development. Christina Baroody Butler examines the ways in which educational institutions and practitioners can respond to emerging needs of adults who are retraining for vocational roles, changes in environment and personal mandates, and new generational patterns for families. Chapter Seven, by Jo Ann Luckie, examines creative and spiritual awakenings that can determine changes in the life course trajectory. It uses a pilot study to explore what learning environments address growth and integration of the whole person.

In Chapter Eight, C. Joanne Grabinski discusses changing modes of behavior and development that require shifts in holding environments, that is, the places in which one finds oneself in times of growth: a family, community, religious setting, a classroom. She identifies strategies that promote growth and learning experiences that accommodate to the new differentiated learner. Finally, Chapter Nine serves as a review of the nature of transitions adult learners are confronting and points to applications and strategies for anticipating coming changes.

This volume tracks the nature of a transition, the psychological phenomena connected to change in adulthood, learning experiences that challenge adults to achieve their developmental potential, and cultural and spiritual connections that support adult learning. It asks what institutional and instructional changes adult education practitioners may want to explore and provides research and theoretical underpinnings that help define the new terrain of adulthood. The chapters are interlocked in many ways, supporting the findings and principles found in each of the discussions. In addition, each chapter comes from a deep conviction that the learner's world—sometimes in sync with other learners, sometimes bound by personal mandates and boundaries that are unique and individual—is the central context for learning. We must reflect on the power of the climate (social setting, learner's perceptions, cohort, supports, and teaching of adults) as a dynamic opportunity for adult learners.

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