

Chapter 11

The Encore Chapter: The Culmination of Lifespan Development

Kimberley Gordon
University of Arkansas, USA

Jill Auten
Deer Creek High School, USA

ABSTRACT

As tens of thousands of Baby Boomers leave the workplace each month, the stark reality of retirement is often accompanied by an overwhelming sense of dread. Retiring from employment at the age of 65 is often not practical for those without ample financial resources. Many will retire outright while others seek employment in an encore career in roles that are fulfilling and typically require less of a time commitment. Identifying plans for the final chapter in life is essential for contentment and critical for staving off declining physical and mental health. When senior adults understand the nuances of adult learning and the myriad theories associated with lifespan development, they are equipped with fundamental tools to help them navigate the golden years. This chapter provides readers with essential tools to aid adults experiencing significant life changes especially those embarking on their encore chapter.

INTRODUCTION

Humans are multidimensional organisms with cognitive, biological and social dimensions, thus their development over a lifespan is highly complex. Scholars of human lifespan development must first recognize that there is no one true normal; there is no one true center point. Further, the study of a lifespan devoid of any sociocultural and socioeconomic conditions is impossible as development is contextual as countless variables impact the human condition.

To best approach the study of lifespan development and adult learning, it is imperative to understand the concept of stage. Stage is a term used by theorists to describe sections or period of life. While life and aging are complex processes, periods of activity can be used for discussion of lifespan development once the periods are grouped together.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-5667-1.ch011

Sociology, the study of human society through its structures and development, and psychology, the study of human mind including its functions and behaviors, are linked so closely that the combination of perspectives is referred to as psychosocial studies. Psychosocial, according to Howe (1998) is “created by the interplay between the individual’s psychological condition and the social environment” (p. 173). This interplay is both vexing and fascinating. For psychosocial scholars, human progression through the stages of life must include contextual considerations including sensitivity of the scholar to crisis and hardship that color humans’ personal experience and may impact their personal structure. This chapter is intended to provide framework that supports a greater understanding of the adult learning experience.

Science of Learning

- **Pedagogy:** The term pedagogy refers to the science of learning. For many years, the misconception existed that learning was somewhat limited to the youth stage of life. No differentiation in teaching methods existed nor was much scholarship directed towards the study of the uniqueness of adult learners. For scholars of learning and development, the term pedagogy refers to childhood learning.
- **Andragogy:** Andragogy, on the other hand, refers to the science of adult learning. First used by German educator Alexander Kapp in 1833, andragogy took center stage when Knowles (1984) shared his findings about adult learners. Knowles asserted that adult learners had four characteristics: self-directed concept, experience as a resource, readiness to learn, and immediacy-supported orientation to learning. Knowles (1984) added a fifth characteristic, motivation to learn, to his findings a few years after his original publication. Additionally, Knowles (1984) posited four principles of andragogy: be involved in planning instruction, use experience as foundation, find relevance and impact to learners’ lives, and focus on problem rather than content.
- **Public Pedagogy:** First identified in 1894, public pedagogy was described by Sandlin, O’Malley, and Burdick (2011) as a “theoretical construct in education research to focus on processes and sites of education beyond formal schooling, with a proliferation of its use by feminist and critical theorists occurring since the mid-1990s” (p. 338). As it is informal learning, the venues and modes for public pedagogy are endless.

Learning of this nature occurs regularly in homes, in public venues such as museums, in pop culture via performance artists, and through mass media including street art and printed materials. This assertion by Sandlin et al is supported by the earlier claim of Winnicott (1971) that learning occurs through both creation and discovery giving a psychological development validation to the simple activity of play. Contributions to this field of study include the concept of the emancipated spectator (Rancière, 2014) referencing audience members who while being entertained were also educated about particular topics.

- **Transformative Learning:** “Transformative learning is an adult’s ability to revise and form new perspectives through critical reflection on the mental frames of reference and habits that function as filters for making sense of experience” (Mezirow, 1991, p. 59). Cranton (2000) and Dirkx (1998), offered transformative learning is a more fitting paradigm in that it “explores the potential of using adulthood experience to revise long-held perspectives and meaning schemes through the development of a critical perspective (Carter, 2002, p. 59).

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