Introduction

- Research in and the development of adult theory offers rich material from which numerous implications have been drawn about learning in adulthood.

- This chapter reviewed the developmental characteristics of adults from four perspectives:
  - biological aging
  - psychological change
  - the influence of sociocultural factors on development
  - the integrative paradigm.

Biological Aging

- With regard to biological aging, all adults experience some changes as they age.

- Many of these changes vary from person to person and may have little effect on learning thanks to advances in technology.
Biological Aging

- Biological development refers to the physical and biological changes that occur over the life span.
- Although it appears that we will all experience many major changes in our physical beings at some point in our lives, the effect of these changes on our capacity to learn is largely unknown.
- Many of these changes may prove to be very minor, except in cases of underlying disease processes.

Psychological Changes in Adulthood

How do psychological models of adult development relate to learning?

- Educators who accept that their job is to help learners achieve the highest level of development possible could encourage students to examine their assumptions, and facilitate critical reflection on these assumptions.
- Through mentoring and learning activities designed with development in mind, facilitators can enable the "transformational journeys" of their students.

The Sociocultural Perspective

- Change in adulthood is determined more by sociocultural factors, such as social roles, race, and gender, than by individual maturation.
- Two strands of work from the sociocultural perspective were described:
  - First -- the importance of social roles, such as parent, worker, or friend.
  - Next -- the socially constructed nature of the concepts of race, gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation and how defining these concepts as social constructions versus individual traits has affected the way we think about adult development.
Social roles are determined primarily by societal expectations and change over time.

Adult educators have often designed programs tied to social roles, such as parenting classes or workshops on retirement.

Society still determines at what age we ought to be engaged in which life events, although some would argue that the age norms for events are much more flexible than they were in the past.

Integrative Perspectives

Although application of the integrated models to learning in adulthood has been limited, the message conveyed by the theorists is clear:

To understand development in adulthood fully, one must move beyond explanations fostered only by one or two perspectives.

Educators of adults must be mindful of the impact of single-perspective theories "on shaping and maintaining conventionally held views about what it means to be a mature and healthy adult."

To understand fully how adult development is linked to adult learning, educators of adults should consider multiple explanations of what adulthood is all about, rather than rely on just one or two paradigms.

It seems that adult development is influenced both by our biology and our social environment. To what degree is not clear.
• We need to acknowledge perspectives beyond the psychological lens that has driven our research and practice on learning in adulthood for the past three decades.

• The more we know about adult learners, the changes they go through, and how these changes motivate and interact with learning, the better we can structure learning experiences that both respond to and stimulate development.

Assignment

• For November 5th:
  - Read Chapters 11
  - Submit Annotation for Chapter 12 before class

• Remember, Learning Activity 8 is due Nov 19th
• Your other Learning Activities are due Nov 26th