

An Abstract of the Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies Thesis of:

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Life-Long Adult Learning—A Transformational Process for Creative Aging

This thesis is a synthesis of literature that reviews the importance of life-long learning and the contribution it can make to the process of aging creatively in order to provide better health, happiness, and purpose in a person's life. It is important to understand adult learning theories, and to explore the needs and interests of older adult learners as more people are living longer. Jack Mezirow addresses transformative learning theory as a way to reassess our past beliefs and behaviors, and through this critical process of self-reflection, we can understand and look at ourselves and the world differently.

Paulo Freire, an educator who grew up in Brazil during the 1920's and 1930's, was a great influence in the field of adult learning theories and gives a good historical perspective about the "banking method" of education. Some educators explore the relevance of Freire's perspective for the Twenty-first century.

Other adult learning theories are given a feminist perspective, women's experiences as adult learners, the older adult learner, and educators approach to adult learners. This review of adult learning theories lays the foundation for the changing role education will play in the lives of an active baby boom generation as they retire. With many people searching for meaning and purpose, new demands will occur in the field of adult life-long. Learning and living creatively with a sense of community is a commonly heard theme, and many universities across the country are beginning to address these needs through campus oriented living communities. As these develop, the potential for a greater sense of community in an intergenerational setting may help to enhance the lives of an aging generation.