

## Book Review

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Mizzi, R. C., Rocco, T. S., & Shore, S. (Eds.). (2016). *Disrupting Adult and Community Education: Teaching, Learning, and Working in the Periphery*. Albany: State University of New York Press. 352 pp. \$90.00 (hardcover).

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*Disrupting Adult and Community Education: Teaching, Learning, and Working in the Periphery* offers a timely and important critique of neoliberal and globalizing premises as they situate adult and community education at local, national, and transnational levels. The editors' assemblage of a global array of established and emerging adult learning scholars launches a critically interdisciplinary challenge to the normative current framings in adult and community education scholarship. Particularly through case studies—of educators and prisoners, sex workers, artisans, micro-entrepreneurs, Aboriginal and Indigenous people, immigrants, and those who contest normative sexual and gender relations—the collected chapters expose and recontextualize those prevailing normative assumptions.

The bookends include a forward, acknowledgment, introduction, contributors' bios, and index. Chapters of the book are divided into four sections, the first offers rethinking around the normative locations of adult education practice and particularly to decenter the prevailing notion of who or what can be a student. From this foundation, the second presents work by educators within "peripheral" spaces of engagement. The third section specifically explores one of those peripheral spaces in detail: the immigrant experience of work and learning in a new world order. The fourth broadly addresses the global engagement of transnational adult education. Over its 19 chapters, readers are continuously invited to reimagine learning spaces beyond the classroom.

The editors' opening Introduction deftly marks out the trajectory of the chapters that follow, outlines the foundations of current adult education and how they fit in the present world-order, and offers a synthesis for the whole book. In chapter 2, the authors critique and revise prevailing developmental assumptions around "youth" and offer an expansive alternative definition that informs the rest of the book. This alternative sense thus resonates in later chapters that describe teaching tools that adult educators might use for transformative learning. Chapter 4 shows how interspacing adult education with a systems approach and feminist theory—as an inclusive, systems-oriented, self-reflexive set of participatory practices—can undermine oppressive systems within prostitution. Chapter 16 similarly calls for a combined rereading of past adult education theorists in tandem with feminist and postcolonial studies for adult education in

Cuba, Asia, Africa, and Australia. The last chapter concludes the book with provocations to researchers and practitioners to probe and engage more deeply with teaching, learning, and working in the periphery.

Moving seamlessly between rich description, historical contexts, and well-researched analysis across multiple authors, a great strength of the book is its use of case studies, which makes it appropriate for teaching theory and educational practice as they occur both nationally and internationally. Overall and within individual chapters, the book rigorously keeps in view those intersections of race, gender, education, and social justice that we encounter in real-world contexts every day. The cases presented interrogate established practices and discourses of adult education, especially around strategies to enable social justice, rights, policies, and practices, while opening debate on prevailing hegemonic, too-often unquestioned, assumptions. As an authoritative and compelling framework for critical thinking and debate around adult and community education in general, scholars, practitioners, and students will likely find it accessible and useful, although by shining a light on the periphery it also risks co-optation, intellectual gentrification, or increased attempts at control of that periphery.

If the book's great strength is its case studies, its main weakness is the absence of contributions from adult and community education scholars and case studies from Africa, where adult and community education occurs extensively. Similarly, the section "Transnational Adult Education and Global Engagement" does not describe transnational experiences from Asia and Africa. While no book can cover everything on such a broad topic, more inclusion of such work would have more broadly enriched readers' experiences.

In general, the book provokes readers to think about ethical values, and how power is marshalled, in adult and community learning. Read together with Merriam and Bierema's (2013) *Adult Learning: Linking Theory and Practice*, this would provide an invaluable overview of the topic. This highlights the major theme of the project: "To call into question the normative assumptions of adult learning principles and presumed locations of practice repeatedly mentioned in adult learning texts" (p. 13).

To realize the aims of this project not only means potentially freeing education from its formal, established, and controlled parameters but also points to how it can become accessible to other spaces, ad hoc, and informally. Bracketing the established adult and community education experiences, these chapters not only successfully foreground subversive and potentially alternative ones but also navigate the treacherous ground where the local and the global, the "center" and the periphery interact.

## Reference

- Merriam, S. B., & Bierema, L. L. (2013). *Adult learning: Linking theory and practice*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.