

theory, competitiveness, or changes at work. Getting Stanley Aronowitz’s talk into print is no doubt a coup, but it’s a shame no references could be provided to support his text—which still reads as an informal talk rather than an informed chapter. It’s also disappointing that some early writers on women’s work and learning don’t make it into the reference list in Chapter 2.

Nevertheless, many strong empirically based and theoretically informed chapters are in this collection, with Kiran Mirchandani et al.’s “The Paradox of Training and Learning in a Culture of Contingency” being a leading example. The book is also representative of the useful work going on in Canada to puncture the myths of mainstream workplace learning rhetoric. There are some omissions (for example, the role of unions is largely ignored, as are employee development schemes), but the editors have made the most of what they have. Although the editors all come from OISE, they represent different dimensions and strengths of the critical tradition that has emerged within Canadian scholarship on work and learning.

The title suggests a reader could expect an examination of the concept of lifelong learning, or at least more references to the growing critical lifelong learning literature, but this is not the case—it is only visited in a few chapters. The afterword does review some aspects of the debate and makes some useful points about the lack of a knowledge economy, while at the same time the editors are optimistic that current rhetoric on knowledge work can be turned toward recognizing workers’ existing knowledge and genuinely improving educational/learning opportunities for workers.

This book deserves to be widely distributed in Canada and sold in Canadian dollars (it is advertised at \$39 US, but a request to a university bookstore resulted in a sale price of \$58.50 CDN). An e-mail to the publisher confirmed it is not using a Canadian distributor nor selling the book in Canadian dollars. This is a shame, as the collection deserves to be adopted as supplementary reading material across the curriculum.

Bruce Spencer
Athabasca University

***NARRATIVE AND THE PRACTICE OF ADULT
EDUCATION — PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES IN ADULT
EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING SERIES***

Marsha Rossiter and M. Carolyn Clark. Krieger Publishing Company, Malabar, FL, 2007, 187 pages.

Narrative has been a topic of study across disciplines for decades. It is an interpretive approach that has the potential to inspire and support adult learning in myriad forms, and is one that Marsha Rossiter and M. Carolyn Clark subscribe to and regard as invaluable in their scholarly endeavours as teachers and learners. It is a way of “being and doing” (p.

3) that they suggest lives in our collective day-to-day and shapes who we are and who we are becoming.

Rossiter and Clark's book, *Narrative and the Practice of Adult Education*, is part of the *Professional Practices in Adult Education and Lifelong Learning Series* dedicated to examining issues of relevance for a wide range of practitioners. Rossiter is assistant vice chancellor for lifelong learning and community engagement at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh. Clark is an associate professor of adult education in the Department of Educational Administration and Human Resource Development at Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas.

Rossiter and Clark acknowledge the degree to which narrative is evident in various practices in adult and lifelong learning, but suggest that what is lacking is an understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of narrative and their potential to inform further the teaching and learning process. They name as foundational to their work "the essential connection between experience and learning" (p. 10), and set out to marry various theoretical postures to practice with the intention to cultivate and influence adult learning. Their overall agenda is to invite those interested and invested in adult learning into a conversation about the promise and possibility of the use of narrative as theoretically sound practice.

One of the most compelling features of the book is the way in which the authors use narrative practice to shape the book itself. They speak to their own storied nature as learners and leaders of adult learning. They engage in reflective thinking throughout the text, and draw from their experience as seasoned practitioners. The integrity of the book lies in its capacity to demonstrate narrative in its very telling.

Rossiter and Clark explore narrative as a way of meaning-making and interpreting one's life, and also as a way of knowing and understanding. They trace historical traditions and contexts in which narrative has evolved and continues to exist. They provide a theoretical foundation of narrative that is comprehensive and creates clear linkages to current-day understanding.

By building on theoretical underpinnings of narrative, the authors examine the idea of a storied life, and situate it within lifespan developmental theory with a particular emphasis on adulthood. They underscore the idea that "we *are* stories" (p. 3) and create a persuasive argument for the creation of identity as storied beings. They do not shy away from the question of truth in narrative, but rather explore its inherent pitfalls and challenges.

Rossiter and Clark attend particularly to adult learning and draw on ideas from various theorists who have regarded experiential learning and learner agency as important. They create a smooth and coherent link between experiential and narrative learning, and describe a conceptual framework for narrative practice. They situate the theoretical antecedents related to experiential learning (e.g., meaning and knowing, the storied life, and adult learning) in the middle of narrative practice, and highlight their significance. For example, they describe the capacity for narrative to allow learners to link with prior experience at a "profoundly human level" (p. 71) and in ways that invite critical examination and reflection about ideology, power, and larger cultural contexts.

A thread woven throughout the book is the notion of narrative education as interpretive practice. Rossiter and Clark discuss the fundamental nature of interpretation and the vigilance required to build ethical and thoughtful interpretive learning spaces. They emphasize the reciprocity inherent in teaching interpretively and the working out of something new in the presence of what one is granted or given. In other words, they acknowledge that one does not tell stories simply *about* the content, but actually *stories* the content, and the role of the practitioner is to guide that learning process skillfully, intelligently, and ethically.

Of the nine chapters in the book, four chapters are dedicated specifically to practical ways of implementing narrative practice, including a variety of classroom contexts, text-based contexts, program design for community and adult education programs, and enhancing self-understanding. The learning realms on which the authors focus are intentionally diverse to accommodate a wide range of interests.

Narrative and the Practice of Adult Education certainly fulfills the authors' hopes of marrying wide-ranging theoretical underpinnings of narrative to potentially transformative teaching and learning practices. Another impressive feature of the book is the way Rossiter and Clark attend to ethical considerations related to narrative and dissuade any illusion of narrative as the mere diaristic rendering of one's individual experiences. They place narrative within the context of an interpretive approach, and encourage thoughtful and critical reflection. That being said, a more critical and in-depth analysis of some of the narratives included in the book might have emphasized and underscored this idea to a greater extent.

Nevertheless, the book offers evidence of strong scholarship around the power of narrative to transform, interrupt, and inform adult learners. Rossiter and Clark speak to their own transformation as learners and the messy particulars of taking up the task of co-authoring a book. Their work presents as honest, reflective, and insightful.

In true narrative tradition, the final chapter is an “un-ending” (p. 170). Rossiter and Clark extend an invitation to readers to advance the story of narrative practice in adult learning by taking part in the ongoing conversation they so richly have woven together.

Dianne Roulson
PhD Student, University of Calgary