

period. Knowles is a marvellous enthusiast. His charisma can bring joy and understanding and a sense of purpose to people's lives. But when he tackles things intellectual and philosophical, he becomes as dangerous to adult education as the TV preachers are to Christianity. To the extent that he can convince people to adopt his over-simplifications, his gimmicks, and his uncritical recommendations for "improving" adult education, to that extent will he have negated all his committed work as a practitioner and tarnished the warm, humane image he seeks to portray for himself in his autobiography. Instead of accepting his vision of himself as the kinder, gentler Unitarian, it will have to be said:

And there went Knowles
Being warm but promoting chill,
Another moonbeam
Cast from Beacon Hill.

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**FOSTERING CRITICAL REFLECTION
IN ADULTHOOD: A GUIDE TO TRANSFORMATIVE
AND EMANCIPATORY LEARNING**

Jack Mezirow. 1990. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

At the publishers' exhibit at a national adult education conference in 1990 (the year this book was published), a long-time Canadian adult educator told me this was the most worthwhile book there. When asked why, this adult educator agreed with several U.S. graduate students who are neophytes to the field of adult education: the book was both useful to them as practitioners interested in enlarging their repertoire of approaches to use with adults and conceptually provocative to them in its call for dialogue about the centrality of critical reflection and the need for transformative learning.

In the "Preface", Mezirow states the book was "meant to be a resource for educators, counselors, advisors, psychologists, and trainers who are interested in helping adults identify the frames of *reference and structures of assumptions* that influence the way they think, decide, feel, and act on their experience" (p. xiv). He adds that many chapters will be useful to "adult learners who want to gain greater insight into themselves" (p. xv).

The reader not familiar with Mezirow's previous work and/or not particularly interested in the grounding theoretical framework could skip the introductory chapter, scan the table of contents, and benefit from delving into a rich sample of the 16 approaches toward transformative learning contributed by the 17 authors who work in education, religion, philosophy, psychoanalysis, developmental psychology, and psychiatry. Approaches offered range from problem reformulation models such as Victoria Marsick's account of the Management Institute (MiL) of Sweden's action learning program and John Peters' use of Action-Reason-Thematic Technique (ARTT) with underschooled adults to biographical tools such as journals as contributed by Joseph Lukinsky and educational biographies as contributed by Pierre Dominice.

Readers familiar with Mezirow's longterm interest in the meanings adults give to their experiences will recognize his use of the epistemological and phenomenological traditions, his continued preoccupation with the psychological domain, as well as his reintegration of Habermas with a more central focus on communication theory. Especially in the introductory chapter, Mezirow shares his evolving sense of the connections between perspective transformation and critical reflection and their relationships with concepts such as emancipatory education and transformative learning.

Based on Mezirow's interest in communicative competence, the reader might expect clear communication so this book can be the practical and useful collection of approaches (p. xx) it is meant to be. Mezirow's style, though, is reminiscent of Carol Gilligan's *In a Different Voice*. The reader enters into an evolving dialogue with the author which is at points exhilarating and at other points repetitious and circular. Too little attention is given to the relationships between concepts. For example, in the "Preface" Mezirow first defines transformative learning as the "process of learning through critical self-reflection" (p. xvi) and then later in the concluding chapter states "Transcendent learning is learned through critical reflection" (p. 370). The reader is given little help in making sense of the relationships between these types of learning.

There is ambiguity in the way terms such as learning are conceptualized. At one point Mezirow states that the use of the approaches is context dependent (p. xviii). Mezirow later seems to contradict this need to contextualize with his use of generalizations such as "Transformative learning for emancipatory education is the business of all adult educators" (p. 357) and "...we [adult educators] do all have a professional

obligation to become skilled in the strategies and tactics of social action education and to share this expertise where we can with those with whom we have a sense of solidarity" (p. 358). While Mezirow might like to prescribe these roles as suitable ones for adult educators, clearly, all adult educators, especially those in training for business and industry, do not currently view transformative learning for emancipatory education or social action skills and strategies as part of their business. Further, these generalizations do little to substantiate his argument for a focus on transformative learning and emancipatory education.

Throughout the book, the contributors accomplish their assigned task—to present and analyze approaches which could build critical reflection toward transformative learning—with various degrees of success. Some of the contributors such as David Deshler with metaphor analysis and conceptual mapping; Stephen Brookfield with critical incident analysis and television analysis; and Philip Candy with repertory grids clearly state their underlying assumptions as well as their views of the relationships with Mezirow's theoretical framework.

Brookfield, for example, suggests that educators become "phenomenological detectives" (p. 180) and trained, sensitive "psychological and cultural demolition experts" (p. 178) who help students develop critical thinking skills by modeling the approach. He urges caution to educators who "present themselves as critically sophisticated gurus who have come to release learners from the chains of their distorted meaning perspectives" (p. 181).

Other authors such as Thomas Heaney and Aimee Horton with reflective engagement resulting from the conscientization of Chicago Housing Authority development residents; Mechthild Hart with consciousness raising and feminist education; and William Bean Kennedy with ideology analysis of breakthrough incidents with special focus on racism, sexism and classism offer ways to address underlying dynamics of power imbalances resulting from hierarchical social structures such as schools. These authors contribute much needed access to sociocultural and social change perspectives.

While Mezirow is clearly supportive of what he calls social action education, he seems unable to recognize the very real constraints and dilemmas experienced both by students and facilitators of transformative learning attempts. In the concluding chapter, he states "It [the classroom] allows adults a temporary respite from the pressures of action

and convention to experiment with reflection on all aspects of their lives” (p. 369). The reader who has experienced a very different reality in schooling can look to contributors such as Hart to draw out the very real barriers to critical reflection toward transformative learning and emancipatory education.

In the concluding chapter, Mezirow acknowledges the contributors’ potential disagreement with his approach but focuses on his own ideas in relating the diverse collection of approaches and ideologies. Also in this chapter, he highlights other approaches toward emancipatory education—Argyris and Schon’s model of interpersonal communication, Shor and Freire’s “dialogic method of teaching”, and Brookfield’s discussion of strategies such as assumptions analysis and options thinking.

A desirable addition to this book would have been an expansion of the diversity of perspectives with colleagues from other cultures with foci such as the somatic and the spiritual. Also useful would have been a dialogue among the contributors regarding issues such as the appropriate ways to address tensions between the private and the public, the personal and the professional; the ethics of helpers and experts provoking an unease (p. 266) as a catalyst toward transformative learning; and the need for interaction with others and as yet unknown parts of the self as a balancing tool against distorted meaning perspectives. As it is, the book provokes critical reflection on previous ways of viewing learning and education.

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**SOMETHING IN MY MIND BESIDES THE EVERYDAY:
WOMEN AND LITERACY**

Jenny Horsman. 1991. Toronto: Women’s Press

This book is the first full-length study of women and literacy in Canada. The author focuses on the everyday lives of women—and the ways in which women yearn to move beyond the constraints inherent in those lives. She demonstrates how the social construction of “illiteracy” has particular meaning and implications for women who work in literacy as students and for women who work in literacy as volunteers and paid program staff: