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Book Review

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have report that students find this and Spencer's previous edition very useful. Along with Nesbit, Brigham, Taber, and Gibbs' *Building on Critical Traditions*, Spencer and Lange's text makes excellent required reading for graduate students in adult education in Canada.

### References

- Giroux, H. (2006). *America on the edge: Henry Giroux on politics, culture and education*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Nesbit, T., Brigham, S., Taber, N., & Gibb, T. (Eds.). (2013). *Building on critical traditions: Adult education and learning in Canada*. Toronto. Thompson Educational Publishing.

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## LIFELONG LEARNING, THE ARTS AND COMMUNITY CULTURAL ENGAGEMENT IN THE CONTEMPORARY UNIVERSITY: INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

Darlene E. Clover and Kathy Sanford (Eds.). Manchester University Press, Manchester, UK, 2013, 224 pages.

While the academic world is certainly warming up to qualitative research, for some scholars and the public the arts remain a niche interest that, more than other methodologies, seems to be questioned in terms of its rigour and its influence in academia. Editors Darlene Clover and Kathy Sanford are prepared to take on this project, advocating for an infusion of arts-based programming in universities worldwide. They split the volume into traditional academic divisions: teaching and learning, research and enquiry, and community engagement, but this is where adherence to tradition seems to end. Each of these categories contains several contributions, resulting in an eclectic and informative balance of perspectives. The introduction provides background while the final "overlay" brackets the volume, creates context, and synthesizes the final "messages, threads, and tensions" (pp. 175–87).

The first section of the book, "Arts-based teaching and learning," is the most densely populated, with contributions ranging geographically from British Columbia, Africa, the UK, and Scandinavia, while at the same time reaching across the knowledge gulf to connect with all types of students, including marginalized learners. In their chapters, the authors describe projects as diverse as theatre, arts and crafts, and the study of literature. Resonating quite strongly is the use of arts-based learning that involved learners who did not consider themselves to be artists at all. In fact, some of the instructors would not describe themselves as artists either. Instead, the production of an art "piece" seems to destabilize traditional ideas of what teaching and learning are, thus allowing the participants the freedom to think in different ways about what the art represents, often in terms of social justice and community.

In one particularly poignant scene in the chapter by Astrid von Kotze and Janet Small, small groups worked on constructing mobiles from available art supplies. As this activity

was a metaphor for development in Africa, one group quickly designated itself the World Bank and proceeded to control the distribution of supplies to other groups. This action opened a discussion on the larger implications of power and control through economic means.

The theme of social justice continues with Tara Hyland-Russell and Janet Groen’s chapter, which introduces the idea of Storefront 101, a “free university-level literature course for marginalised non-traditional adult learners” (p. 42). The course is meant to provide a safe learning environment and to flatten the traditional hierarchy of the university so that learners on the outside feel less intimidated and more welcome. A powerful section of this chapter discusses a particularly provocative speech by then-premier of Alberta, Ralph Klein, and how students analyzed it as a piece of literature to grasp why it angered them. Students began to understand the power of their ability to take the text apart and identify the ways in which language can be used by those in power.

The next section of the book takes on the even thornier territory of advancing the profile of the arts in research. On a very pragmatic level, Randee Lipson Lawrence and Patricia Cranton present a lively and engaging conversation-style chapter about their experiences as mentors in this field of enquiry that struggles with questions regarding its legitimacy. They apply an extended metaphor of midwifery to their roles, providing practical suggestions and inviting readers to rethink what is possible in the realm of research. As a student I found this chapter to spark my own imagination, and I found myself thinking over and over again, “I could do that!” As in the first section of the book, the idea that arts-based research is potentially for anyone, not just those who work in the fine arts, is raised. Clearly the need for increased democracy in adult education is a value that many of the chapter authors share.

The final section of the book looks at the arts and community cultural engagement as they relate to the university. University-based museums, literacy projects, community forums, and continuing education programs are all highlighted in this section. The writers argue that these sites of engagement are important ways for universities to extend their missions, promoting learning for all. Surely we are all aware that much of this type of programming is often at least partly government-funded and, therefore, is subject to the capricious nature of political favour. However, by innovatively bringing the arts into these programs, those who brought them to the community saw increased learning and the breaking down of hierarchical barriers that sometimes contribute to the perception of elitism within the university structure.

The final wrap for this text is Sanford and Clover’s chapter “Overlay: Messages, threads, and tensions” (pp. 175–187). One unspoken tension I had noticed throughout the readings is the gender disparity in this volume: many more women than men wrote chapters for this volume and both editors are women. Where are the men in the arts and adult education? It was not surprising to see Sanford and Clover take up the issues of gender and power, seeing the arts as a way to be “more inclusive of multiple ways of exploring and representing diverse ways of knowing” (p. 178). Other threads address the neo-liberal reality of economy-driven education and the accompanying demand for quantitative assessment of institutional goals. However, this agenda is placed against a growing need for interdisciplinarity and the breaking down of silos to fuel more creative ways to solve problems. The editors cite the work of many foremothers and forefathers of the field in claiming the space for arts in academia and to legitimize rigorous scholarship that includes and normalizes these

alternatives to traditional pedagogy, research, and engagement. The final sentence issues a challenge: “If we did it, so can you” (p. 186). After reading this pragmatic and inspiring text, I do believe I can.

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