

KATE TILLECZEK & H. BRUCE FERGUSON (EDS.). *Youth, education, and marginality: Local and global expressions*. Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press. (2013). 256 pp. \$38.99 (paperback). (ISBN 978-1-55458-634-9).

All children and youth deserve an education that is equitable and socially just. Yet a great deal of scholarly literature makes visible the pervasive processes of marginalization, exclusion, and societal injustices that are perpetuated in schools on a daily basis. *Youth, Education, and Marginality: Local and Global Expressions* brings together twenty researchers, educators, activists, and graduate students – along with seventeen youth artists – to engage in critical discussion regarding the current state of education as viewed from the perspectives of those on the margins.

This book presents educational research from Canada, Australia, Scotland, and Vanuatu. Each chapter explores education with and for youth from diverse perspectives and contexts which include education for First Nations children and youth, globalization and how it is affecting education, youth empowering their parents and community through education, racialized and immigrant youth, gay and lesbian youth, special education, and youth mental health awareness and literacy in schools. Though the research presented in each chapter focuses mainly on the processes of marginalization that force youth to leave school early, the book also makes visible the resiliency of youth and the ways in which youth are pushing back in an effort to conceptualize and create a system that serves their educational and psychosocial needs.

The most powerful aspect of this book is the way in which the thoughts, opinions, experiences, and feelings of youth serve to ground and enliven the scholarly research. The importance of including the voices of youth in educational research is best articulated by Smyth in chapter two, when he states that “young people are very insightful and eloquent in describing the recuperative conditions that have to be created for them to re-engage with learning” (p. 49). Indeed, the voices of youth add both energy and depth to the research. Editors Kate Tilleczek and Bruce Ferguson tie in the voices of youth through

a variety of mediums including poetry, prose, drawings, and photography, offering captivating and personal accounts of how individuals from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds experience marginalization inside and outside of schools. The works of art that are particularly poignant are those that are accompanied by explanations written by the artists.

The voices of youth also serve to augment the research presented in each chapter. Some of the most poignant youth voices are presented in chapter five, wherein authors Jennifer King, Chelsea Edwards, and Cindy Blackstock document the courageous actions of several Aboriginal youth in their battle to convince the Canadian government to build them a school. This chapter examines critically the discrimination, racism, and marginalization that Aboriginal children and youth have been forced to endure in Canadian educational systems. At the heart of this discussion is a youth named Shannen Koostachin, whose insight, leadership, and courage inspired a movement to ensure that Aboriginal youth across Canada were provided with safe, healthy schools in which to learn. The voices of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth serve to ground the research and provide honest, and often emotional, insights into the importance children and youth place on learning and education, as well as the challenges they face in realizing their dream of receiving an equitable, socially just education.

The book also explores themes important to educational research including inclusion in school learning communities, building relationships founded on safety and trust, valuing the prior knowledge and experiences of youth, and exploring pathways of youth engagement and empowerment. These themes resonate with previously conducted research by scholars such as Jim Cummins (1996) who posits that students will only be truly engaged in school and learning—and therefore less likely to leave school early—if their cultural, linguistic, and experiential knowledge are valued and respected within the school learning community. The contributors explore the daily educational experiences of marginalized youth in-depth, with many using the complex cultural nesting approach (Tilleczek, 2011), which allows for an examination of the factors affecting the lives of young people on individual, social, and systemic levels.

Overall, this collection of research and youth art provides an insightful overview of the issues facing young people who are all too often pushed to the margins of school life and communities. Yet it is also important to look for what is not there, especially when discussing research on those who are most often vulnerable to marginalization. It is important not only to ask “Who is marginalized?” but also “Who does not have a voice?” In this book, what is missing is a specific focus on the world’s most vulnerable and marginalized youth, namely those children and youth from refugee backgrounds. In chapter six, the word “refugee” is mentioned four times, with only one reference to

the violence, trauma, and loss that these young individuals face. Explicit attention is not given to the incredible challenges these youth face when they arrive in Canadian schools, or to the challenges teachers face when refugee youth arrive in their classrooms (MacNevin, 2012). Since this book explores the marginalization of youth from “both local and global contexts, data, experiences, and lessons” (p. 1), it would have strengthened the global focus of the book to provide a deeper exploration of those young people who are not only forced to the margins of schools and communities, but who are also pushed beyond the margins on a global scale.

The timely research presented in this collection, along with the thoughts and insights shared by the youth contributors, makes this book one that should be read by educators, scholars, and policymakers. Several authors are highly critical of classroom teachers in places, which may provoke controversy, but it may also inspire self-examination by interested and reflexive teachers. Indeed, the youth voices in this collection should not only be read and pondered, but also, as Anneke Rummens and George Dei posit in chapter six, the knowledge and experiences expressed by these youth should be used to inspire action that will lead to educational change. These are the stories upon which youth are constructing their identities and establishing the frameworks of their futures. It is imperative, therefore, that the voices of young people most marginalized by educational systems be heard in order to effectively initiate meaningful, equitable, and socially just educational policies and practices.

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