

Book Review

Title: *Vital Questions Facing Disability Studies in Education*

Editors: Scot Danforth and Susan L. Gabel

Publisher: New York: Peter Lang, 2006

Paperback, ISBN: 978-0-8204-7824-0, 383 pages

Cost: \$36.95 USD

Reviewer: Steven E. Brown, Ph.D.

Editors Danforth and Gabel facilitated an excellent collection of 20 essays in 10 categories following their own “Introduction,” which itself comes on the heels of a brief Foreword by long-time disability studies educator Steven J. Taylor discussing disability studies in education prior to being named as such. Each editor also has an essay of his or her own in the collection. Danforth discusses “Learning from Our Historical Evasions: Disability Studies and Schooling in a Liberal Democracy.” This essay, paired with Deborah J. Gallagher’s “The Natural Hierarchy Undone: Disability Studies’ Contributions to Contemporary Debates in Education,” falls under the category, “How Can Disability Studies Inform Our Understanding of Contemporary Political Debates in Education, Particularly in their Relevance to Disabled Students?”

These essays follow a section about “Language and Representation of Disability,” which includes Phil Smith’s creative, “Split----ing the ROCK of {speci [ES]al} e.ducation: FLOWers of lang[ue]age in >DIS<ability studies,” which in addition to its content displays a form many will find challenging, just as many students with various disabilities do with our current educational practices and formats.

I particularly liked Gabel’s dissection of “Applying Disability Theory in Educational Policy: NIDRR’s “New Paradigm of Disability as a Cautionary Tale,” in the section, “In What Ways is Disability Studies (Ir)Relevant to Local, State, and National Policy?” How does disability studies interact with institutionalized policy and bureaucracy and, maybe more importantly, how can, or will it, influence progressive changes in the future?

Other sections address demographic populations, such as schools, teachers, families, culturally and linguistically diverse populations, and communities. Still others address subjects like technology, international education and why teach disability studies in education.

Disability Studies in Education is a plentiful smorgasbord of appetizing forays into disability studies in education. As soon as I finished reading the book I began using it in the class I was teaching. It belongs in any disability studies library.

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