

Book review

Millei, Z., Griffiths, T. & Parkes, R. J. (Eds) (2010). *Re-theorizing discipline in education: Problems, politics & possibilities*. New York: Peter Lang.
Vol. 34 in *Complicated conversations: A book series of curriculum studies*. General Editor: William F. Pinar

This book should appeal to a wide variety of readers. Teachers of all ages will find that many of the issues discussed will resonate with their own classroom experiences, while those on the margins of teaching, or even those interested in social and political theory, will find a great deal of intellectual nourishment – not to mention challenges – within the book. Firstly, one should not mistake this as some sort of ‘how-to’ guide for managing unruly classrooms. The book does not so much seek to solve problems inasmuch as it seeks to problematize issues of discipline in education. Furthermore, the authors in the book come at the problem of discipline from a great many number of angles. Do not expect debates about corporal punishment and such; be prepared to consider how discipline operates in educational environments such as the dojo, and international relations theory can disrupt commonsense assumptions pertaining to children as ‘citizens’ of a school community.

The authors in *Re-theorizing discipline in education* pick up on Foucault’s radical reconceptualisation of concepts such as ‘discipline’ and ‘power’, and present a significant challenge to contemporary discourses surrounding educational practices, especially in regards classroom management. The authors do so by engaging in provocative theoretical discussions, as well as ethnographic and qualitative studies that take place in students’ homes, classrooms, as well as in extra-curricular activities such as sports, and allow those involved in these terrains (parents, teachers, principals) to voice their particular views regarding discipline. What emerges is a picture of disciplinary strategies, techniques, and at times localised and spontaneous tactics that attempt to either ‘discipline’ or instill discipline in the student.

The multifaceted notion of discipline, as posited by Foucault, informs most of the works in this book – discipline as a verb, discipline as a ‘form’ of knowledge, discipline as a disposition or form of self that the student must interpellate into their own self-construction through processes of subjectification – and seek to reinvigorate the ‘productive’ aspect of power in accordance with Foucault’s conceptualization. Throughout the book, the authors come at the question of ‘discipline’ from an extremely wide variety of angles. Whilst Foucauldian concepts form the cement that binds the book’s chapters together, each author mobilises their ‘own’ Foucault – consistent with the thinking that there are as many Foucaults as there are people reading him. This is evidenced in the ways in which Watkins attempts to build a positive, productive disciplinary power from Foucault’s work that she posits does not leap forth from the original texts, or in Southgate’s chapter in which she largely refutes Foucault’s notions of resistance emerging from the operation of power, instead chronicling a number of adults’ memories of school in which a rather sovereign form of power seems to be the dominant mode of classroom management.

'Discipline' and 'education' are even more broadly approached in an extremely thought-provoking chapter by Parkes ('Discipline and the dojo'), in which Parkes discusses the ways in which a 'disciple' of a martial arts 'discipline' receives their education, via processes in which bodies are made docile and rendered empowered through the acquisition of both bodily and mental disciplining by the sensei. The chapter by Cliff also looks at the body as a site of biopolitics, in this case in regards discourses surrounding the 'Healthy Citizen' and those 'at risk' of unhealthy lifestyles for whom their very corporeality signifies an immoral lack of discipline. Taylor broaches the uncomfortable area of children's sexualities and the ways in which desire is disciplined. Her chapter demonstrates the ways in which discipline operates in relation to heteronormativity, which is often overlooked by adults in the field.

The latter chapters are marked, for the most part, by a departure from Foucauldian approaches. In the closing chapters the authors seek to problematise notions of 'citizenship' as used in a fairly neutral sense to discuss students. Drawing on broad political understandings of 'citizenship', the authors show how the term is far from neutral and can be linked to a number of broader political aims. Thus, as Imre and Millei (p. 142) point out, unwanted effects may emerge in which those that fail to meet the desired criteria for a 'child citizen' may well end up being constructed as 'second-class citizens'. As a whole, the final chapters tend towards political theory more generally, bringing ideas of thinkers as diverse as Kant, Habermas, Beck, and Wallerstein to elucidate the stakes when one talks of 'citizenship'. The globalisation of discourses surrounding discipline and citizenship in regards children is also discussed.

That *Re-theorizing discipline in education* brings together such an array of ideas to reconceptualise the idea of 'discipline' is testimony to the editors' commitment to their aim of 'stepping back' from the 'problem' of discipline to reassess the very issues at hand 'without remaining constrained by the prior baggage the idea of 'discipline' carries' (p. 176). What arises is a challenge to those interested in the issues at hand to think more broadly about questions of discipline, or perhaps more correctly, to force us to ask different questions altogether. Overall, I found the book to be extremely accessible whilst being both imaginative and thought provoking. I would not hesitate in recommending it to anyone interested in issues of education or social and political theory. In my view, the book's editors have successfully destabilized the concepts pertaining to the 'problem of discipline'. I would hope that a great many people will read the book and continue the conversation that this book initiates.

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