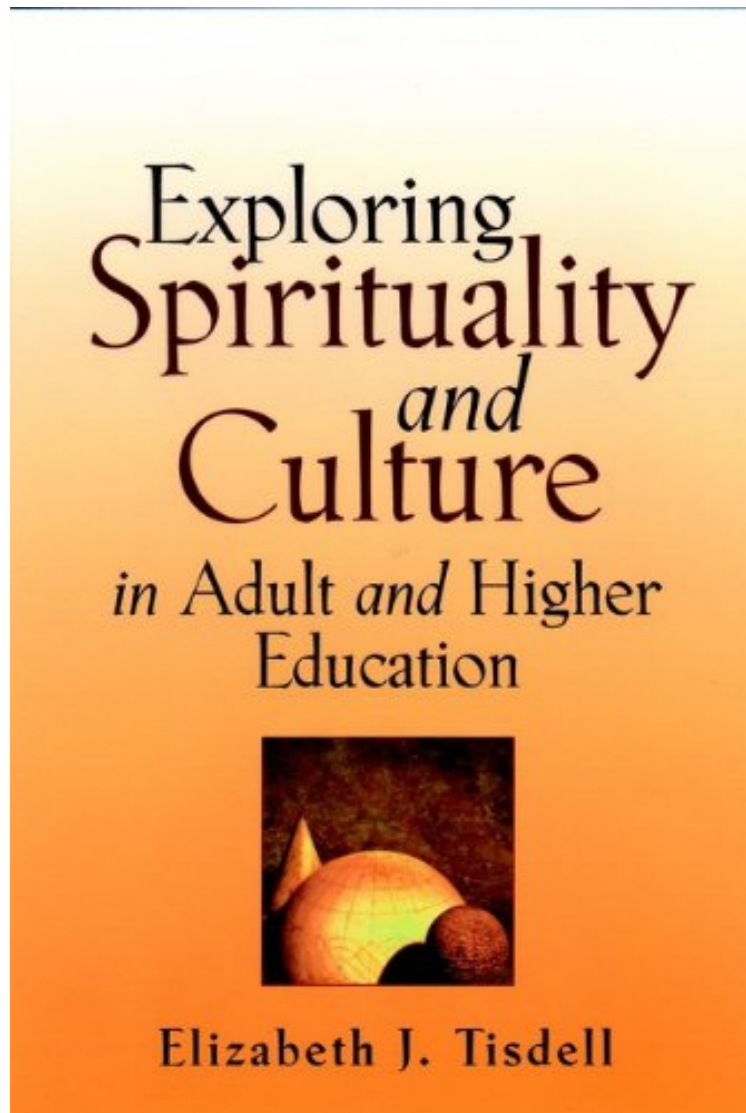


Exploring Spirituality and Culture in Adult and Higher Education

Elizabeth J. Tisdell

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Elizabeth J. Tisdell : Exploring Spirituality and Culture in Adult and Higher Education before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Exploring Spirituality and Culture in Adult and Higher Education:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. No fundamentalism, please. By J. C. Simmons Part III is where the "rubber hits the road." Tisdell adeptly takes up the many threads of spiritual experiences, cultural heritage, spiritual and cultural development in adults, including the effects of gender, identity development, and the one-time "surprise occurrences" in these realms as well as the change over time as affected by all of these elements acting together and weaves them into an effective "theory-in-progress of a spiritually grounded and culturally relevant pedagogy" (p. xv).

Unfortunately, near the end of the final chapter, a rather large flaw works its way to the surface of this wonderful tapestry. Fundamentalists may find themselves feeling marginalized, overlooked, and perhaps even a bit pre-judged after reading this part. This is surely due mostly to the fact that none of the research participants ascribed to any faith or system of spirituality that could be classified as fundamentalist (of any flavor). However, the author did think to add a few comments about fundamentalism in the final few pages of the book, to the effect that "There is, of course, a chance of having to deal with religious fundamentalism in the classroom" (p. 252). Tisdell further implies that the fundamentalist idea that there is one truth indicates a reliance on "religious authorities." (No one could possibly believe there is one truth without being told to believe it.) Thus, the spiritual development of fundamentalists is obviously stalled at Fowler's stage three, the conventional faith stage. If there is one flaw in the book or in Tisdell's theory, it is in the conundrum of her absolute statement in relation to fundamentalism: "...there is no one right answer" (p. 242). This statement defies logic and produces a paradox in the same way as the statement "Everything I say is a lie" is paradoxical. Regardless of this flaw, the tapestry is both practical, in that it is very useful and immediately applicable to practice in the classroom, and beautiful, in that it provides a glimpse at things of great wonder on which readers will reflect time and again. By overlooking the comments on fundamentalism and by dealing with fundamentalists according to the same general principles that Tisdell recommends for all others, practitioners and theorists alike will find this book useful for practice and for reflection. It provides a real opportunity for personal growth in itself. 1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Great ideas for exploring culture in the classroom. By Joan I have used Dr. Tisdell's book in several university courses over the past three years. She brings to light the need for recognizing and honoring the cultural diversity that makes up American and global classrooms. I have adapted exercises in her book for use in a range of course topics. The idea of building cultural awareness and sharing cultural beliefs, regardless of course subject matter, has created a new depth in course work that has been very well received by students. The content in "Exploring Spirituality and Culture in Higher Education," helps the process of building inclusive communities, while fostering richer discussions and understanding. I recommend this book to every educator and their students.

Exploring Spirituality and Culture in Adult and Higher Education is written from the unique perspective of teacher, researcher, and author Elizabeth Tisdell who has extensive experience dealing with culture, gender, and educational equity issues in secular adult and higher education classrooms, and formerly in pastoral and religious education settings on college campuses. This important book discusses how spiritual development is informed by culture and how this knowledge is relevant to teaching and learning. For educators, an understanding of how spirituality is informed by culture, and how spirituality assists in meaning-making, can aid in their efforts to help their students' educational experiences become more transformative and culturally relevant.

"This should prove to be a groundbreaking volume. Every adult educator will benefit from engaging in the conversation." (PAACE Journal of Lifelong Learning, Summer 2004) "...this book makes an important contribution to a new and growing body of knowledge." (Journal of College Student Development, December 2003) "A Professor of Adult Education describes How Spirituality Can Be a Valuable Teaching Tool" (By Dana Sobyra in The Chronicle of Higher Education) "The work is an easy read, not overly laden with references but enough to give it authority." (TCRecord.org, 10/8/03) "All teachers of adult and higher education should have a copy of this book. It is a beautifully written meditative and practical guide exploring the connection between culture and spirituality in teaching that points us towards a transforming experience for both teacher and student." mdash; David T. Abalos, professor of religious studies and sociology, Seton Hall University "Through a compelling blend of vivid biographical vignettes and informed theoretical analysis, Elizabeth Tisdell explores how spirituality fires adult and higher educators' efforts to create culturally relevant practices. This will be a landmark text in our efforts to understand spirituality's intersections with education." mdash; Stephen Brookfield, Distinguished Professor, University of St. Thomas "This book takes on a crucial topic at just the right time. Adult and higher education is ready for a revival of engagement with spirituality, and, along with this, the author manages to weave in three other thick skeins of thought: development, transformative learning, and cultural work. This book takes the hugely important step of seeking the deep truth in the interrelatedness of these skeins, and it moves the discourse ahead in concrete ways." mdash; Laurent A. Daloz, author, Mentor: Guiding the Journey of Adult Learners "This book provides a valuable contribution to the literature on teaching in adult education and higher education. It is a pioneering work in the sense it is creating a direct link between spirituality, culture, and learning in adult and higher education. While there have been other attempts at addressing these issues, this is the first book, of which I am aware, that links all three together." mdash; Talmadge Guy, associate professor, School of Leadership and Lifelong Learning, University of Georgia "This book reveals how spirituality exists as a powerful force that shapes and impacts learners and their learning experiences. It bravely treads where few have traveled by daring to discuss spirituality, culture, and education in the same breath." mdash; Juanita Johnson-Bailey, associate professor, department of Adult Education and the Women's Studies Program, The University of Georgia "Tisdell has a unique perspective that is very much needed. Her awareness that one's spiritual perspective is based on

one's idiosyncratic history which involves age, gender, experience, preferences, and culture is immensely wise." —Jane Vella, author, *Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach* From the Inside Flap Spirituality is an important part of human experience. It is fundamentally about how people construct meaning, understand their life purpose, and move toward greater authenticity. But spirituality also has a cultural dimension, in that meaning-making is manifested in cultural expression and mediated by a cultural context. By making a connection with the richness of meaning-making experiences as culturally embedded, educators can draw on students' cultural backgrounds and spirituality in the educational process. "Exploring Spirituality and Culture in Adult and Higher Education" is written from the unique perspective of teacher, researcher, and author Elizabeth Tisdell who has extensive experience dealing with culture, gender, and educational equity issues in secular adult and higher education classrooms, and formerly in pastoral and religious education settings on college campuses. This important book discusses how spiritual development is informed by culture and how this knowledge is relevant to teaching and learning. For educators, an understanding of how spirituality is informed by culture, and how spirituality assists in meaning-making, can aid in their efforts to help their students' educational experiences become more transformative and culturally relevant. Throughout this informative book, Elizabeth Tisdell shows higher and adult educators how they can draw on both psychological and sociocultural aspects of spirituality to facilitate ongoing knowledge construction in their students-- and themselves. For example, educators and students can use classroom activities that incorporate image, symbol, music, and art form that focus on both the commonalities and differences of human experience. "Exploring Spirituality and Culture in Adult and Higher Education" offers a pathway for educators who are seeking new ways to teach in a culturally relevant way, increase the relevance of their students' educational experiences, and ultimately achieve social transformation.