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Book Review of *Decolonization in Practice: Reflective Learning From Cross-Cultural Perspectives*

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Book Review

Datta, R. (Ed.). (2023). *Decolonization in Practice: Reflective Learning From Cross-Cultural Perspectives*. Canadian Scholars.

Reviewed by Alishau Diebold, Wilfrid Laurier University

Decolonization in Practice: Reflective Learning from Cross-Cultural Perspectives is a thought-provoking and timely exploration of community-based decolonization practices in a cross-cultural context. The editor, Dr. Ranjan Datta, has carefully curated a body of work that shares community-rooted research and experiences through compelling narratives that invite readers to reflect on the complex nature and processes of decolonization.

Datta's book is acutely relevant in today's globalized world, where issues related to cultural diversity, inequality, and social justice are central to many discussions. The various chapter authors encourage readers to think critically about their own roles in the decolonization process and the responsibility each person carries in reshaping the narratives and structures that have been shaped by centuries of colonialism. The book challenges readers to engage with the concepts of decolonizing, land-based learning, anti-racism, Indigeneity, environmental sustainability, reconciliation efforts, and to think critically about the application of these concepts within a Canadian history full of intersecting diverse cultures and power dynamics.

This book is divided into five thematic parts and centres decolonial reflective stories from Indigenous, settler, Black, transnational immigrant, new immigrant, to refugee communities. Each part is built on an active portfolio of research and includes reflection questions alongside suggestions for further reading to facilitate additional engagement with the content beyond the book. By bringing together reflections in one body of work, the authors humanize common key theoretical concepts across different cultures, which enhances relatability and connection for readers. The inclusion of these different perspectives reinforces the idea that lived experiences are crucial to understanding the challenges and potential breakthroughs in the decolonization process. By providing community-based examples and engaging stories, the book reinforces the significance of each person's unique role in the larger narrative of decolonization. These first-hand narratives will be instrumental for educators, students, practitioners, and policymakers seeking examples of community-based decolonization practices.

In the first part, "Indigenous Community Reflections on Decolonization in Practice," the chapter written by Christine Fiddler, "Decolonizing University Pedagogical Approaches Through Indigenous Storying," explains how university pedagogical approaches can be decolonized through the inclusion of Indigenous literatures in a learning environment. Fiddler draws on their identity as a *Nehiyaw* (Cree) and combines Indigenous methodology and grounded theory to examine how Indigenous literary works, when shared in a university learning environment could build resilience within Indigenous students. The study found that including Indigenous literature in first-year classes enabled participants to heighten their awareness of the experiences of Indigenous people. Through exploring the challenges faced by Indigenous authors, participants were prompted to reflect on their own beliefs and how these beliefs shaped their understanding of Indigenous identity. As a current PhD candidate, I can relate to these experiences as I underwent the same reflexive process of learning when exposed to Indigenous knowledges in my first-year epistemology class; this literature empowered me to gain a deeper understanding of the differences between Indigenous and colonial worldviews.

In the second section, “Racialized Immigrant Women and Children Community Reflections on Decolonization in Practice,” Priyanka Mahey’s chapter, “Responsibility to Build a Decolonial Community: From a Colour Settler Woman’s Perspective,” explores the significance of building a decolonized community and its role in sustaining environments of change. Mahey declares, “when we open our minds to the concept of decolonization, we are telling ourselves to look at the world through more than one lens, instead of a universal one” (p. 132). As someone who also holds a dual identity as an Indo-Caribbean Canadian woman, I agree with this declaration that residing in Canada necessitates an understanding and respect for the history, culture, traditions, and teachings of Indigenous communities.

In the fifth part, “Anti-Racist Organization Reflections on Decolonization in Practice,” the chapter shared by Rhonda Rosenberg, “Responsibility to Build Decolonial Community(ies): A Learning Journey Through Anti-Racism Education and Action With the Multicultural Community in Saskatchewan,” emphasizes the importance of engaging in a collective process of learning, unlearning, growing, and effecting change together. The reflection presented by Rosenberg offers valuable lessons and inspiration for individuals interested in actively participating in anti-racism and decolonization efforts. This is particularly relevant for those embedded in multicultural and ethno-cultural communities. The chapter conveys the vital importance of mobilizing and walking alongside communities in undertaking anti-racism efforts. In my community-based research with Indigenous, Black, and racialized youth, this message resonated with me, as youth unwaveringly affirm that they should be involved in any effort that concerns their welfare.

Overall, a strength of the work lies in its ability to confront and explore the complexities and labour surrounding decolonization efforts. The analysis highlights that this work must be done in a way where historical injustices and privilege is acknowledged and resolved prior to building pathways towards equity. *Decolonization in Practice* calls for the recognition that learning and creating lasting change will require a diverse range of tools and a sustained commitment to reconciliation. While holding many strengths, this book could benefit from further examining the difficulties of reconciling structural obstacles in more specificity. This dialogue would offer valuable insights for those who are actively involved in decolonization movements. By delving into the aspects of navigating bureaucratic hurdles, systemic barriers, and resistance from established colonial structures, the book could provide readers with more strategies for community-based responses to this resistance and how to build mutuality in everyday practice.

Decolonization in Practice: Reflective Learning from Cross-Cultural Perspectives centres stories from everyday community practice and is a valuable addition to the growing body of literature on decolonization. It challenges readers to consider the concept of decolonization and how the responsibility to bridge the gap between theory and practice lies with each person to initiate respectful community connections and conversations that inspire and support life-long growth, learning, and change processes. The book is highly recommended for scholars, educators, policymakers, and anyone interested in advancing their knowledge and understanding about community-based decolonization practices. Overall, this work serves as a profound call to action, urging readers to actively begin a journey to collectively act towards building a more equitable and just society.

Alishau Diebold is a PhD candidate at the Faculty of Social Work at Wilfrid Laurier University in Ontario, Canada. Her research explores how community-based justice interventions can reconcile experiences of marginalization. She also works to build a program of research that prepares social workers for socially just practice.