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Book Review: Revisiting Multiculturalism in Canada

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Book Review: Revisiting Multiculturalism in Canada: Theories, Policies and Debates

Guo, S. & Wong, L. (Eds). (2015). *Revisiting Multiculturalism in Canada: Theories, Policies and Debates*. Boston: Sense Publishers, 352 pp.
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Reviewed by Geraldine Balzer, University of Saskatchewan

In 1971, Canada adopted a multiculturalism policy that has, over the ensuing four decades, become a beloved or contested policy. Currently many Canadians would see multiculturalism as an integral part of the Canadian identity, a policy to be proud of and differentiate Canadian citizenry from our American neighbours and the increasing racism evident in Europe. However, recent Canadian events such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings concerning residential schools reveal the limitations of the multicultural policy and the ways in which Aboriginal Canadians have been marginalized and discriminated against. The current influx of Syrian refugees, the latest in a history of refugees welcomed by Canadians, has also challenged Canadians and exposed the cracks in the multicultural mosaic.

Guo and Wong, in this extensive edited collection of eighteen essays, gather a diversity of academic voices who explore Canadian multiculturalism through their disciplinary lenses. The first section, entitled *Theorizing and Debating Multiculturalism*, consists of six essays that examine Canadian multiculturalism as policy and as a societal foundation. Will Kymlicka provides insight into a changing Canadian society and the ways in which subsequent integrations of multiculturalism have transitioned from ethnicity to the inclusion of race and most recently religion. The increasing diversity of Canadian citizens, no longer predominantly of European descent, challenges the policy as it was originally conceived, requiring new vision for the 21st century. This section concludes with Leung's recognition that the policy relies on the citizens who enact the policy: "The challenge to Canadian society is how to nurture its citizens to develop a global mindset sensitive to all cultures and peoples, cognitive skills, and the passion to achieve the goals advocated in multiculturalism" (p. 117).

The second section, *Multiculturalism, Ethnicity and Belonging*, includes four essays that look at the specific experiences of ethnic groups in Canada. Guo and Guo consider the tensions created by the articulated need for immigrants to meet the demand for labour and the marginalization of ethnic groups who fill those labour needs and their subsequent ghettoization. The remaining three essays consider the experiences of two ethnic groups, Jews and Tamils.

The third section focuses specifically on *Youth, Identity and Racialization*. James and Chapman-Nyaho use critical race theory to critique the Toronto Police Services Youth in Policing Program, demonstrating how a program designed to help at risk youth, uses "racialized assumptions about possible social problems and risk" (p. 234), subtly reinforcing systemic racism. Tastsoglou and Petrinioti examine the impact of multiculturalism on the identity formation of youth of Lebanese origin and Cui looks at lived experiences of second-generation youth.

The fourth section, *Multicultural Education*, provides a literature review, an analysis of multicultural education in Toronto from 1960-1975, the perspectives of

parents concerning minority religions in the classroom, and a final essay that explores the politics of difference through current events. Each of the essays identifies the need for critical multiculturalism and notes that the current policy often resulted in lip service to diversity while continuing to practice systemic racism through the unquestioned white privilege. Galczynski, Tsagkarakaki, and Ghosh detail the many ways current events can be used to “unpack the complexities of multiculturalism” (p. 289). They challenge educators to expand their definition to include “individuals who do not represent the societal norm in terms of factors such as race, gender, class, sexual orientation, (dis)ability, or religion” (p. 289).

Fleuras concludes the collection by challenging educators to move beyond multiculturalism, recognizing the complex diversities that now make up the Canadian population. Fleuras imagines a postmulticultural Canada and proposes a framework for governance into the future.

Guo and Wong’s edited collection provides a critical look at Canadian multicultural policy and the ways in which it has shaped Canadian society. However, the essays offer a critical look at the successes and shortcomings of this policy and consider new visions that would carry Canada into the future. Some of the essays provide a snapshot into impact this policy has had on specific ethnic groups. While mentioned in several essays, no one chapter considers the impact of this policy on First Nations, Inuit and Métis; considering their important place as first peoples of this land, this is a serious oversight. The impact of systemic racism, created by government policies and unconsciously supported by multicultural policy needs to be addressed. This collection is a good beginning.