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## **Symbolic Violence in Socio-Educational Contexts. A Post-Colonial Critique**

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## Review

Odrowąż-Coates, A., & Goswami, S. (Eds.) (2017). *Symbolic violence in socio-educational contexts. A post-colonial critique*. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Akademii Pedagogiki Specjalnej im. Marii Grzegorzewskiej. ISBN 978-83-64953-69-9

The book *Symbolic violence in socio-educational contexts. A post colonial critique* is a joint publication prepared by authors from all around the world: Algeria, Ecuador, India, Italy, Netherlands, Nigeria, Poland, the UK and the USA. It is designed around the broad theme of symbolic violence (e.g., Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) and is connected to the idea of post-colonialism (e.g., Grosfoguel, 2008, 2013; Moraña et al., 2008). The discourse in the book encompasses various contexts – starting from the traditionally understood socio-educational context (Part I and II of the book) and meandering through other fields, e.g., language (Part II), art and health (Part IV). Moreover, Part III is devoted to meta-thinking about the theoretical framework of the book. It is a brave and successful attempt to create a common space for multinational and multicultural voices to reflect on a wide variety of deeply humanistic topics.

The critical pedagogy approach inspired the creation of the book and the selection of the content (Odrowąż-Coates & Goswami, 2017a, p. 7). However, the adjective “critical” might also be applied to this work in another context. The problems and issues raised in the book are critical to

the contemporary, globalized world dealing with the heritage of Western-centrism. As mentioned in the *Preface*, “This collection of essays, (...) point to the very real necessity to humbly ask non-Western peoples, to share their wisdom (...) and for the West to begin to recognize that it is high time we begin looking elsewhere for answers to our most pressing and persistent problems” (Monzó, 2017, p. 10). This sentence reflects the critical need to go beyond the established patterns of thinking to find new solutions to social problems. In my view, the book in itself is an attempt to cross boundaries of many kinds: own thinking, scientific discipline of interest, as well as cultural and national identity – and encourages the reader to do so.

It is crucial to cross the boundary of own thinking in order to be open to experiencing the perspective of others. The book mentions issues that evoke emotions – often stark – and provoke a dialogue with own values. These matters are, for instance, trauma, violence or non-heteronormative sexuality. The design of the book encouraged the openness and freedom of the contributors, showing respect to both their viewpoints and to the fragility of the topics. The reader, following this pattern, is presented with the phenomena without being forced to take anything for granted.

Another boundary that should be crossed while reading the book is that of scientific disciplines. Interdisciplinarity is often considered necessary for the post-colonial framework, which is a basis for this book (e.g., Connell, 2004; Huggan, 2008; Wareing, 2009). Initially, the disciplines covered within might be viewed as discrete (e.g., pedagogy, sociology, art and architecture, medicine, cultural anthropology). However, including these disciplines is both deliberate and relevant. Furthermore, despite the risk of mixing a variety of perspectives, the book does not offer entropy, but logic and order, facilitating the understanding of both the individual parts and the whole material.

However, to fully benefit from this understanding, another boundary – of cultural and national identity – needs to be crossed. The authors are of various nationalities and cultural backgrounds. The themes are concentrated on various cultural contexts. In my view, similarly to developing the theory of mind (e.g., Premack & Woodruff, 1978; Leslie et al., 2004), in the case of this publication, readers are invited to build a “cultural” theory of mind and

to practice switching one's own perspective to the perspective of people from other cultures.

Crossing boundaries is not the only competence that can be achieved through reading this book. Another one is critical meta-thinking about the presented material. The authors leave space for own afterthought, not providing straightforward solutions to presented matters. Meta-thinking is a complex skill to be learned, however, analyzing this material and coming back to it might help develop this competence, which is crucial in the contemporary world of constant information streaming.

The book might be recommended to all groups of recipients. These can be both specialists already prepared for critical meta-thinking as well as readers who are less adept, but curious and open to novel understandings, gaining multicultural literacy and the experience of crossing boundaries.

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