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Language Learning as a Process of Transformative Socialization

Mathews-Aydinli, J. (2017). *International Education Exchanges and Intercultural Understanding: Promoting Peace and Global Relations*. Cham: Springer International Publishing. 179 pp. DOI: 10.1007/978-3-319-43829-0.

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Abstract

This review critiques Julie Mathews-Aydinli's *International Education Exchanges and Intercultural Understanding*. Consisting of a series of ten essays from a diverse body of educators and administrators, this book highlights the importance of examining the purpose and impact of intercultural exchange in the twenty-first century. This review will evaluate the arguments made throughout the chapters and examine why this topic is important for those interested in the field of international education.

Keywords:

International education, Public diplomacy, Study abroad, Intercultural understanding, Educational exchanges

In 1946, the Fulbright Act, introduced by United States Senator William J. Fulbright, was signed into law to promote peace and mutual understanding through the use of international education and cultural exchange. Created in response to the devastation experienced throughout World War II, Senator Fulbright introduced the bill with the belief that a world community of good

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neighbors can be achieved through a broader and deeper mutual understanding of one another. Over the next 70 years, policymakers, educators, and advocates of peace have defined, redefined, and questioned the purpose and results of these international education and cultural exchanges. Can world peace be achieved through intercultural understanding? What factors contribute to a successful mutual exchange? Can there be U.S. government sponsored exchange without U.S. interests taking precedence? These questions lie at the heart of *International Education Exchanges and Intercultural Understanding: Promoting Peace and Global Relations*.

Edited by Julie Mathews-Aydinli, *International Education Exchanges and Intercultural Understanding* explores the role of international exchange as a pathway to peace and mutual understanding. Mathews-Aydinli describes the link between educational exchange and public diplomacy as seemingly “logical and practical”, but not “problem-free” (p.4). Consisting of a series of ten essays from a diverse body of educators and administrators, this book highlights the importance of examining the purpose and impact of intercultural exchange in the twenty-first century. By approaching the topic of international education from different angles, the contributors were able to provide the reader with an excellent overview of the challenges faced by those promoting peace through government sponsored intercultural exchange.

The book is divided into two sections. The first six chapters focus on the factors that should be considered when engaging with international educational and cultural exchange programs. The editor carefully organized the chapters in a way that reveal the complexities of intercultural exchange with each turn of the page. Starting with the link between public diplomacy and educational exchange in Chapter 1, the editor introduces the reader to the lens in which this book explores international exchange. Mathews-Aydinli argues that the problem of incorporating educational exchange into public diplomacy is that intercultural understanding will always be compromised to create an environment that enables government policies. In Chapter 2, Deardorff explores the meaning of mutual exchange and how intercultural understanding can be achieved through intentionality. Wilson (Chap. 3) looks specifically at how the expectations of policymakers are limiting the impact of international exchanges. In Chapter 4, Baker examines the role of language in educational exchanges and highlights the pros associated with a universal language. Hayden (Chap. 5) and Bean (Chap.6) delve into the challenges of communicating the goals of international exchange in both technology and in marketing. Throughout these chapters, the reader is introduced to the premier conversations taking place within the field of international education as it relates to intercultural exchange.

The second section of the book introduces four empirical studies on education and training exchange programs. Each study highlights the effectiveness of the program when compared to the goal of mutual understanding and global relations. The programs examined are the U.S. Military Exchange programs, the Japanese Exchange Teaching program, the Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant program, and a pre-exchange preparation program for Turkish students heading to U.S. universities. The studies echo the sentiments in the chapters from the first part of the book and provide a clear picture on the challenges of implementing international educational exchange programs within the context of promoting peace.

While the book succeeds in introducing the complicated relationship between international education and public diplomacy, there were some areas of contention. In Chapter 5, Bean makes the argument that U.S. educational exchange shifted emphasis from mutually beneficial toward strategic self-advantage after the terrorist attacks of 9/11. Some would argue that this emphasis of self-advantage was never a shift and, for some policymakers, was the basis for supporting U.S. government sponsored educational exchange from inception throughout the Cold War. Furthermore, it goes against government interest to support an initiative that is not self-advantageous. Within government, the role and goal of international education and cultural exchange have been in limbo, and the debate of how these programs operate in times of war and peace have been taking place since the Fulbright Act was signed into law to promote mutual understanding through the use of mutual cultural exchange.

One might be surprised that the essays never actually delve in the topic of peace. For a book that has peace within its title, the reader would expect more discourse on the conflicting visions of what peace looks like. For instance, Iain Wilson's chapter entitled "Exchanges and Peacekeeping: Counterfactuals and Unexplored Possibilities" sheds light on the complicated terrain of providing proof to policymakers that exchange leads to peace, but never actually characterizes peace within the text. This omission lays bare a deeper discussion on whether intercultural exchange and public diplomacy go hand in hand. Diplomacy, at its core, is a delicate mechanism to conduct relations of one's state with others. Peace, meaning freedom from war or violence, is a part of public diplomacy, but not its goal. At the core of international education is mutual understanding with the hope of peace. One intention is pure while the other is convenient. Both have paths to peace, but neither can guarantee it. It is this dilemma that makes *International Education Exchanges and Intercultural Understanding* such a stimulating read for those interested in the complexities of educational exchange. Throughout the text, you'll find a discourse analysis which focuses on the power relationships in politics and education expressed

through language and practices. The text introduces conversations that are rarely researched but very important if progress is to be made in the field of international education.

In 2019, the Fulbright Act was faced with a 71% budget cut proposed by the current administration. Though the budget proposal did not get approved by Congress, the proposed cut speaks to a larger narrative of the incessant tension between public diplomacy and educational exchange. Dialogue centered on these pressures are crucial if we are to come to a resolution. Overall, *International Education Exchanges and Intercultural Understanding* provides a comprehensive introduction to the concept and complexities of international education as a tool for peace. This book is a must read for those interested in intercultural exchanges, international relations, public diplomacy and the actual practice of soft power.

Author Biography

William Smith II, MA, is Director of International Programs within the Purdue University College of Veterinary Medicine. He is also pursuing his PhD within the Purdue University College of Education in Curriculum Studies. His area interest is globalizing veterinary medicine education and improving the overall landscape of international education.