Rose-Redwood, C., & Rose-Redwood, R. (2019). *International encounters: Higher education and the international student experience*. Rowman & Littlefield.

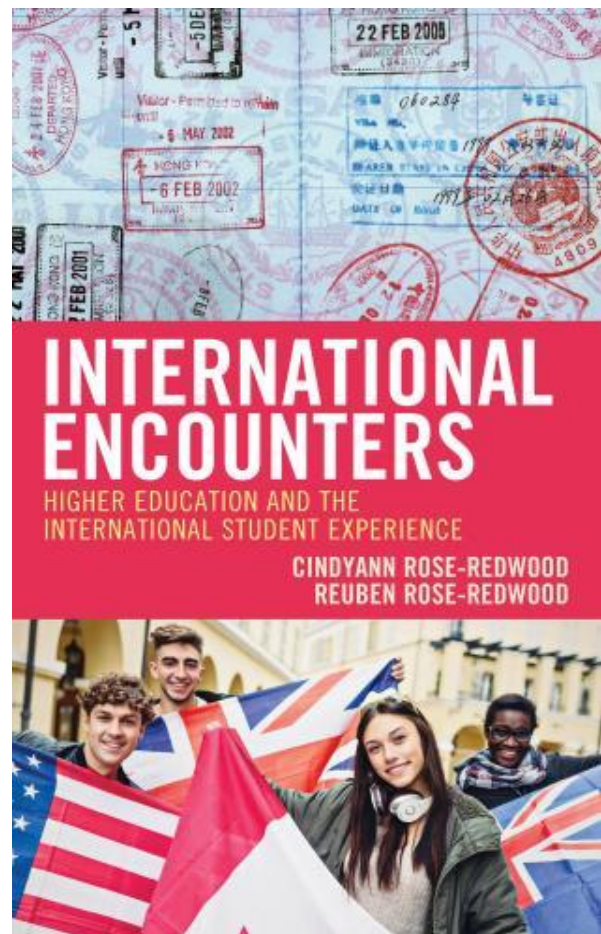Pp. 200   ISBN: 978-1-475839-42-5

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Jenny Lee (2015) wrote that "while there is considerable investment and effort devoted to attracting international students, far less attention is paid to the experiences of international students once they arrive at the host institution" (p. 3). In *International Encounters,* Cindy Ann Rose-Redwood and Reuben Rose-Redwood highlight these myriad experiences of international students, positive and negative, and elucidate many universal themes that are applicable in four anglophone countries, across three different continents.

Many scholarly works on international and comparative studies over many decades have focused on a "cultural deficit model" (p. 8). This model emphasizes how many international students have negative experiences while studying abroad either due to their own inability or unwillingness to adapt. This edited collection is a refreshing change as many of the contributors challenge this deficit concept. *International Encounters* features several themes: social interactions of international students; academic and cultural experiences; intercultural competency and global fluency demonstrated by many student

sojourners; the complexity of identity development in international students; and the challenges of racism and xenophobia for international students as both victims and also, perpetrators. Additionally, themes such as loneliness and post-program employment are addressed. Even though these themes relate to the contexts of the four countries highlighted in the chapters (United States, United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada), the ideas are relevant outside of these geographic boundaries and will be found valuable among academics and higher education practitioners across many disciplines.

The theme that appeared repeatedly in many of the chapters, irrespective of the country being reviewed, was cultural adaptation and adjustment. Using a post-colonial lens, scholars such as Homi Bhabha (1986) have argued that "the colonial subject be interpolated within the ideology of the metropolis; that the subject adopt the culture and values of the center" (Williams, 2003, p. 590). Similarly, current discourse on the topic of international students' adjustment largely places the onus of adjustment entirely on the international student. However, in their co-authored contribution, Andrea Nelson Trice and Cindy Ann Rose-Redwood argue that putting the burden of adaptation solely on the international student removes all responsibility of engagement from American domestic students at colleges and universities in the United States, further exacerbating the lack of intercultural and cross-cultural competence of American students. The authors assert that "American graduates often lack key cultural competencies" (p. 52) and that "if contemporary scholarship is to move beyond the deficit model, it is crucial to develop an approach that reconceptualizes international students as important assets who play an essential role in the internationalization of higher education" (p. 52).

The editors of this book delicately expose the culpability in the perceived gaps of engagement by domestic students and international students. One chapter shows how American students "have the most to lose by not mutually engaging with the international student body" (p. 11). Contributors provide a plethora of examples in other chapters to highlight how many international students from different countries and continents also "found obstacles to social networking, such as incompatibilities of age or nationality and problems of language and communication" (p. 119). When it comes to the topic of adaptation, adjustment, or the process of acculturation for international students, *International Encounters* could benefit student affairs administrators and members of the professoriate, as well as international and domestic students.

Multiple chapters focus on issues of racism faced by students studying abroad. In their chapter, Denis Hyams-Ssekasi and Elizabeth Frances Caldwell illustrate how black international students from Africa faced more prejudice than any other group of international students. According these authors, the students' experience of being subjected to overt racism at the hands of security and immigration personnel in the United Kingdom was traumatic enough for many of them to "find themselves at a crossroads, trying to decide whether to stay and continue their studies or to go back home" (p. 107).

Similarly, racism is explored in a chapter by Camille Hernández-Ramdwar, who shared narratives of Caribbean students about their experiences, explicating how their multifarious races and ethnicities are often dismissed by Canadians and grouped under the reductive and generic umbrella of the racial category, "black" (p. 176). For example, one student named Jeanne shared that she was often singled out in class and asked to provide feedback by her professors if the topic of the African American experience ever came up. However, as a Caribbean who never had been to the United States, she said, "I'm not African-American - I don't know a thing!" (p. 182).

Other instances of covert racism, including daily discrimination and microaggressions, toward international students are sprinkled throughout the book. Some examples are shared by Kimine Mayuzumi and colleagues in their chapter on Japanese women's experiences with microaggressions and stereotyping in Canada. One interviewee said, "When I first had conversations with non-Japanese people in Toronto, one of the most popular topics was sushi" (p. 165). This student further emphasized that the conversation surrounding sushi did not help her form connections with non-Japanese people but that the stereotype caused her to feel "rejected as a person… feel belittled" (p. 165).

These chapters on racism are very relevant to contemporary conversations and remind the audience of the book that international students have many influences contributing to their sense of identity beyond nationality. Nobel Prize-winning author Toni Morrison (1992) wrote, "racism is as healthy today as it was during the Enlightenment" (as cited in Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 8) and yet, international students are often viewed through the lens of their national origin and international status alone. Shideh Hanassab (2006) wrote these students "differ markedly with respect to nationality, race, ethnicity, cultural norms and customs, physical appearance, and linguistic background" (p. 158). Given how diverse these students' backgrounds are, not recognizing the various races and ethnicities of these students leads to ascribing commonalities to people from vastly varied backgrounds and promotes stereotypes. These chapters on race align with Bryce Loo's research, who wrote about international student experiences in the United States (2019):

> While international students are viewed through the lens of national origin from the perspective of the admissions office, once they arrive on campus they are often viewed through

the prism of American racial and ethnic classifications. Since these distinctions differ from the students' own understanding of differences, they can be jarring and alienating (para. 5).

These chapters on race and ethnicity highlight demonstrate the universal applicability of these issues and the factors contributing to the negative experiences of international students in all four countries.

In the same way that the editors were able to find balance in how they represented the topic of adaptation and adjustment, comparably, they were able to show balance with the topic of racism. This book highlights how many international students become victims of racism upon arrival in their host countries, and that they can be the perpetrators of racism too. In another chapter, Le and colleagues shared their findings that many students from Vietnam revealed prejudiced views against non-white Australian professors, mostly from China and India, and that their expectation, upon arrival in Australia, was to be taught by "Aussie teachers" (p. 147).

While contributions in *International Encounters* adeptly cover the topic of racism, the topic of xenophobia in the four countries was given short shrift. Xenophobic attitudes and behaviors have either hindered or helped universities with attracting international students. Early in the book, the editors opine, "the very premises of international education and cross-cultural learning are under attack by ethnonationalist demagogues who are fostering a climate of xenophobia, fear of the Other, and racial hatred to serve their own political ends" (p. 14). The ramifications of Brexit detailed in one of the chapters on the United Kingdom highlights how Canada is benefiting from Brexit by now attracting more international students) but minimal attention was paid to the issue of xenophobia in the chapters dedicated to the US and Australia. The US has recently grappled with the

undisguised rise of the Alt-Right, and Australia has had a long and violent history of prejudice and racism towards racial and ethnic minorities.

International Encounters was not only informative and well written, it was enjoyable. As a former international student, this book related to my own experiences and truly captured the nuanced process of transition for many international sojourners. It was also a welcome change to see international students portrayed as highly competent individuals who have much to offer to their host institutions and countries, culturally, academically, and even economically, despite the challenges they face. The editors bring a diverse and multidisciplinary approach to the topic, making this book relevant to anyone who is seeking a better understanding of challenges and opportunities for international students, as well as those who wish to delve deeper into conversations about international student mobility and the general process of internationalization at universities and colleges in the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada.

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