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Book Review 1

Gerhard, A., McLean, S. & St. Denis, V. (2022). [White benevolence: Racism and colonial violence in the helping professions](#). Columbia University Press: Fernwood Publishing.

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Editor IJSWE

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White Benevolence: Racism and Colonial Violence in the Helping Professions is an edited volume with an emphasis identifying the historical foundation for current environments of social inequality and social injustice. The 21 authors had a shared vision. All had a desire to enhance critical race theory, antiracism theory, anticolonialism theory and whiteness studies. Although the emphasis is placed on Canadian history and its current environment, the insights offered are applicable anywhere within our global society. In a united format, the authors envision white benevolence as a form of “paternalistic racism.” I find their perspective refreshing and creative which is best illustrated by citing the chapter titles:

- Living my Family Through Colonialism
- Toxic Encounters: What’s Whiteness Doing in a Nice Field Like Education
- How Indigenous Specific Racism is Coached into Health Systems
- Within this Architecture of Oppression, We are a Vibrant Community: Indigenous Prairie Prisoner Organizing During COVID-19

- Tracing the Harmful Patterns of White Settler Womanhood
- Policing Indigenous Students: The School Prison Nexus on the Canadian Prairies
- Stories We Tell: Indigenous Women and Girls' Narratives on Police Violence
- Colten Boushie and the Deadly Articulations of Settler Colonialism: The Origins and Consequences of Racist Discourse
- What Can "Settler of Color" Teach Us? A Conversation of the Perplexities and Complexities of Decolonization in White Universities
- I am a Settler: Considering Dominance Through Racial Constructs and Land Relationships
- Unmasking the Whiteness of Nursing
- The Whiteness of Medicine
- The Circle of Rocks: Cannibal Culture, Kinship and Indigenous Youth in the Saskatchewan Public School System
- Permission to Escape White Entitlement in Antiracism and Anticolonialism
- An Interview with Dr Alex Wilson: Queering the Mainstream

Each chapter constitutes a comprehensive review of literature addressing the topic found in each individual title. Taken as a whole, the book offers a synthesis of a massive amount of high-quality data and theoretical analysis to perform as a catalyst to comprehend *paternalistic racism*. Although the editors of the book do not articulate the audience for which this volume has been written, it is clear that they intended to attract Canadian social workers and others who have a concern for social equality.

Taken either as a whole or each individual chapter, the result is that the reader will be propelled to reflect on one's past experiences and reframe life events, which provides a chilling revaluation of one's own life. As a white male social worker, I was propelled to rethink my experiences within the

context of what I've read. The focus of my thoughts evolved around what Americans refer to as "white privilege." I never thought of myself as privileged and certainly never felt *privileged*. My life was filled with battles (mostly intellectual) with other white men. Such overt conflicts and intimidation does not feel like a privileged experience. However, within the light found within this book, I have drawn a different conclusion, which forced me to reconceptualize my understanding of white privilege. The book made me rethink that the experience of white privilege should not be thought of as a privilege at all: It should be the norm. If privilege is the ability to experience life fully in the same way that everyone else does, it is, in fact, the manner in which all people are entitled to experience. White privilege, as a concept of oppression, clearly, empirically exists. Those who do not experience it are experiencing *social injustice*. What, in fact, we call white privilege is actually the *normal* way in which everyone should experience their life events. Everything else is social injustice!

Typically, two major concerns are salient in assessing an edited book: First, each of the chapters within this book provide "stand alone" perspectives. That is, one could read a single chapter without the need to read the entire book. This phenomenon is characteristic of most edited volumes. For the instruction of social work students, the independence of the chapters can be considered problematic in providing instruction. Although this is a worthy book for college assignments, professors need a methodology to tie the chapters together. I have a recommendation. As part of instruction, professors can employ "standpoint theory" (Swigonski, 1994) as a tool to unify the insightful chapters within this book. When a professor uses a theoretical framework to tie these chapters together, the result is an extraordinarily powerful learning experience. Although Swigonski's work is old, good theory traverses historical circumstances and continues to offer profound insight.

Second, for students who purchased the book for an assignment or others who are using the book for research purposes, it is absolutely essential that the index is thorough and even handedly addresses all key concepts. The completion of an index for an edited book is a herculean task.

After a thorough assessment, I have concluded that the index will be helpful for both students and researchers who need to return to material that they read. If readers are forgetful like me, this index is an absolute necessity.

In the end, I recommend this book without reservations. *White Benevolence: Racism and Colonial Violence in the Helping Professions* should be adopted in every academic library that includes social work or human services curricula. Certainly, I see the book as critically important for Canadian students, but I can understand how important the readings would be for those studying social work in the northwest United States. It is a worthy read that will have an impact on personal insight and, most importantly, everyday social work practice.

Reference

Swigonski, M. E. (1994). The logic of Feminist Standpoint Theory for social work research. *Social Work*, 39(4), 387–393.