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## BOOK REVIEW

***(RE)CONSTRUCTING MEMORY: EDUCATION, IDENTITY, AND CONFLICT***

**EDITED BY MICHELLE J. BELLINO AND JAMES H. WILLIAMS**

**SENSE PUBLISHERS, 2017. IX + 248 PAGES**

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**ISBN 978-94-6300-858-7**

*(Re)Constructing Memory: Education, Identity, and Conflict*, edited by Michelle J. Bellino and James H. Williams, offers insight into the dynamic field of history education and its relationship to the state and to collective memory in conflict-affected countries. Highlighting the complex relationship between education, conflict, and peace, Bellino and Williams bring together a diverse series of case studies to understand the importance of this relationship in both theory and practice. The four parts of the volume examine the various facets of this relationship: the role textbooks play in supporting and legitimating national narratives and building collective identity; how formal narratives of colonial and imperial history in schools change and persist over time; the complex nature of specific programs of interaction and integration in divided societies; and the nuanced role education can play in building peace by developing democratic practices or reconciliation mechanisms in classrooms. The contributing authors offer in-depth case studies of important issues in the field, not only expanding on existing frameworks—particularly the “two faces” of education framework (Bush and Saltarelli 2000)—but also challenging many assumptions within the field.

The first part of *(Re)Constructing Memory* establishes the foundation of the book by exploring how textbooks shape collective identities and national narratives in conflict-affected countries. King (chapter 2) argues that frame analysis is a useful framework for more fully understanding the specifics of how national narratives in textbooks reflect and amplify social conditions and motivate students to act (p. 23). Hagai et al. (chapter 3) and Abdou (chapter 4) similarly demonstrate, through content and narrative analysis, respectively, that ideologies and narratives in textbooks reinforce specific national narratives through both overemphasis and omission. All three authors note that these narratives are not static and that they change relative to the motivation of the government in question, be it Rwanda (King), Cambodia (Hagai et al.), or Egypt (Abdou).

Part two builds on the above themes and extends them by considering the legacies of colonialism and imperialism across the globe. Chapters five through eight identify the difficulty associated with nation-building projects in schools as a result of colonial legacies of exclusion and violence. Each does so from a different perspective: Greene (chapter 5) traces the role of teachers in student learning about national narratives in Uganda and argues that teachers continue to have an important role in contesting “state-sponsored silences” (p. 118) of Ugandan history in schools. Vom Hau (chapter 6) flips the perspective of most colonization scholarship to look at how postcolonial states commemorate colonialism, noting that teachers are active agents within the schools who can make curricular changes in nation-building projects, especially when history is contested. Littleton (chapter 7) turns toward the representation of Islam in English history textbooks and shows that narratives of Islam across time are portrayed in persistently problematic ways. In chapter 8, Wang demonstrates China’s success in shifting the national narrative from a strictly Marxist-Leninist one to a narrative of “humiliation,” which in turn has influenced Chinese foreign policy and international relations.

Part three highlights the complexity of integration and interaction between two groups in deeply divided societies: Northern Ireland (Gallagher, chapter 9) and Israel/Palestine (Kolikant and Pollack, chapter 10). Gallagher argues that the difficulties in implementing integration reforms have left a gap wherein students receive external and divisive narratives of the conflict. In contrast, Kolikant and Pollack look at a specific curricular program designed to increase intergroup contact through web-based programming and show that this type of programming can help build empathy and shape national narratives to have more inclusive identities.

The final section brings together the themes from the previous three to note that schools are resistant to top-down national narratives of identity and are inherently messy places for identity formation. For instance, Goulding (chapter 11) introduces the concept of “pedagogies of haunting” (p. 243) in both the formal history curriculum and informal spaces to show that these are places where history can be both confronted and developed. Gómez (chapter 12) further disrupts the binary view of “positive” or “negative” faces of conflict in schools, arguing that schools are spaces where multiple processes often occur at once. Paulson (chapter 13) looks at the importance of teaching about recent conflict in schools. This section thus showcases the diverse and sometimes conflicting ways that education can shape identity and national narratives in conflict-affected countries.

## BOOK REVIEW

The final chapter, by Pingel, notes that, “wittingly or unwittingly, [education] contributes to forming the young generation’s value systems and social attitudes” (p. 315). *(Re)Constructing Memory* highlights the many processes through which education contributes to constructions of national narratives and collective identities. The book shows us that these processes change over time, depending on government priorities. It also reminds scholars and practitioners of education in emergencies that the relationship between education and conflict/peace is not as dichotomous as the literature in this field has argued in the past. We must be mindful that multiple processes that lead to both peace and conflict occur simultaneously in classrooms around the world.

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Bush, Kenneth D., and Diana Saltarelli. 2000. *The Two Faces of Education in Ethnic Conflict: Towards a Peacebuilding Education for Children*. Florence, Italy: UNICEF, Innocenti Research Centre.