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Book Reviews (editorially reviewed)

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McCartin, L. F. & Dineen, R. (2018). ***Toward a critical-inclusive assessment practice for library instruction***. Sacramento, CA: Library Juice Press.

Does assessment have a place in critical pedagogy? As authors McCartin and Dineen (2018) rightly acknowledge, traditional forms of assessment in higher education are often seen as an exercise in “unilateral control” (p. 28). The instructor measures and evaluates student learning, and as a result assessment remains a process that *happens to* students rather than a process that empowers students as collaborators in the classroom. In *Toward a Critical-Inclusive Assessment Practice for Library Instruction*, McCartin and Dineen explore new forms of assessment that work to dismantle this longstanding power dynamic, and share personal experience and practical strategies for rethinking assessment through a critical-inclusive lens.

A slim but meaningful read at 149 pages, this book from Library Juice Press will be of value to anyone interested in pedagogical assessment and/or critical practice for library instruction, including librarians, researchers, and students. A major strength of this book is its practical usability. Often books about critical theory are understandably focused on the theoretical aspects of a topic, but McCartin and Dineen strike a healthy balance of theory and practice in this text.

The authors describe Dr. Saran Stewart’s Critical-Inclusive Pedagogical Framework as their guiding theoretical foundation. McCartin and Dineen explain this framework with clear and accessible language, ensuring the reader fully understands the inspiration behind their work. Much of the book is dedicated to actionable tips, best practices, and suggestions for critical assessment activities inspired by Dr. Stewart’s framework. The authors explore how they assessed both learning and teaching with a critical approach, sharing their experiences with implementing student self-assessment, group assessment, and instructor-peer observation. The book also includes a number of appendices featuring assessment tools created by the authors that readers can adapt and use in their own practice.

The authors speak from a place of refreshing realism. In the first few pages they acknowledge the limitations of implementing critical pedagogy in one-shot instruction settings. For many librarians, instruction is limited to the one-shot classroom visit so this

acknowledgement, often overlooked in other books about critical library instruction, is important. Keeping these limitations in mind, the authors later provide guidance on adapting their strategies and methods to the one-shot setting, adding to the practical usability discussed above.

Further, the authors acknowledge that implementing a critical assessment practice is often complicated and creates new tensions within the classroom. McCartin and Dineen describe how, in an attempt to dismantle the power structures inherent in the teacher-student relationship, they asked students to set their own learning outcomes. Overly concerned with sharing power in the classroom, the authors excluded themselves completely from the process of curriculum design with unfortunate results. McCartin and Dineen recognize that setting boundaries in the collaborative, democratic classroom can be difficult, but instructors should not shy away from recognizing and actualizing their authority where appropriate.

The authors write from a highly personal and self-reflective perspective. They discuss their experiences with critical assessment as a journey they continue to undertake, highlighting trial and error in the classroom and discussing what has worked, what has not, and what they have learned along the way. For this reason, the book's material is very approachable. Critical theory can often be an abstruse topic area, but McCartin and Dineen put the reader at ease by emphasizing that they are not experts, but that they too are librarians seeking to improve their approach to assessment. At one point, the authors even call on the reader to collaborate, encouraging those who employ the strategies recommended in this book to get in touch and share their experiences. In this way, McCartin and Dineen cultivate a strong sense that we are all in this together.

Toward a Critical-Inclusive Assessment Practice for Library Instruction is aptly titled. By including "toward" in the title of this book, the authors hint at how this book is a gesture, a movement into new territory rather than a clear stopping point. Throughout the book, the authors draw important conclusions about critical assessment. While their insights will have practical use value for readers, every question the authors answer opens up additional approaches for fostering a truly collaborative classroom. In this way, McCartin and Dineen work to inspire readers to step outside of their comfort zone without trepidation because there is no right way to do this kind of work: there is only trying, reflecting, and trying again.

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