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(Book Review)

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BOOK REVIEW

Critical Race Spatial Analysis: Mapping to Understand and Address Educational Inequity
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Looking at the intersection of race and education in an innovative way is what Critical Race Spatial Analysis: Mapping to Understand and Address Educational Inequity (2017) does. Using a spatial lens, the essays in this collected work, edited by Deb Morrison, Subini Ancy Annamma and Darrell D. Jackson, propose a new way of viewing how race affects educational equity. The book is organized into three sections. The first section, consisting of two chapters, introduces the book's essays and clarifies their underlying theoretical framework. The second (chapters 3-5) explores methodologies used to study the intersection of race and education utilizing spatial theory. The third section, containing the remaining five chapters, offers application of the methodologies previously explored and concludes with suggestions for future research.

While chapter one gives an overview of each of the chapters and the reasons why this work is important, chapter two offers a definition for critical race spatial analysis (CRSA) by clarifying the connection between critical race theory (CRT) and spatial theory, more specifically the work of Edward Soja, and making a case for the use of CRSA in education. There is also a discussion of techniques used in this type of research, such as ground truthing, portraiture, and contextualized counter-geographic narratives. Although each chapter is rich in citations, there is not an in-depth discussion of the cited works, so it is expected that the reader will have some basic knowledge of CRT and spatial theory. In the concluding chapter, the editors highlight the types of tools and methodologies used by the contributing writers in this collection and showcase how they align with CRSA.

Besides CRT, many of the writers in this volume use DisCrit and LatCrit as part of their analyses. The book refers to many methodologies—such as education journey maps, augmented fotonovelas, and the use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software—that challenge the reader to consider data collection in different ways. There are interesting discussions on various spatial topics, including the difference between racial space analysis and CRSA, and spatial visualization versus spatial analysis.

The third chapter explores the use of education journey mapping as a way to disrupt inequity in the classroom. Subini Ancy Annamma examines how such mapping allows students to identify power issues and discuss them in the classroom. In such a way, educational journey mapping gives students the opportunity to see not only what challenges they have experienced, but how they have resisted them. The following chapter challenges the reader to find the spatial component in teaching and learning in order to deepen understanding of inequities in education. It also discusses two methods for examining spatial data, visualizations, and spatial analysis, as well as various GIS tools for exploring education phenomena. In chapter five, Leigh Anna Hidalgo discusses a study she conducted within a community that had been exposed to predatory practices. She explains the use of augmented fotonovelas as a tool to reveal how white supremacy engages in the creation of oppressive spaces. The author highlights this tool as one which
is not bound to academic spaces, so a community can also join in the creation of narratives that are rich and vibrant.

In chapters six and seven, the practice of redlining is at the heart of the studies presented. While Solórzano and Vélez illustrate redlining through a survey of the history of communities around the Los Angeles area, Blaisdell adapts the concept of redlining to the practices of teachers within the classroom, demonstrating how classrooms can contribute to the racialization of space and segregation of students of color. Both chapters explore different tools to approach redlining analysis. CRSA is utilized in the analysis of community data in chapter six, but the study on classroom redlining uses racial spaces analysis. It is in the latter that the notion of the “spacing” of individuals is discussed, as well as the differences between distributive and spatial justice. This comes in handy when reflecting on the study results of Hogrebe and Tate, who used GIS software to look at differences in the opportunity to learn (OTL) for student populations accessing advanced mathematics courses across Missouri.

Chapter eight provides an overview of the difficulties and potentialities of using a spatial approach to study inequities in neoliberal urban education reform. While spatial approaches allow for a clearer visualization of the challenges, Waitoller and Radinsky warn academics on “how spatial representations can obscure, neglect, or elucidate complex forms of inequities at the intersections of race and ability and their relationship with the production of space” (p.162). The editors conclude by reiterating the purpose for the collection of research within the book, as well as their hope that this research will inspire others to continue this work. In this final chapter, the editors share the question that was asked of all of the researchers whose work is included in the collection: “How does space impact educational inequity?”

The book moves from very explicit applications to a discussion of using geospatial and temporal analysis within a neoliberal system. One of the strengths of the book is that the authors are adept in explaining concepts they introduced, such as geographies of despair and geographies of hope, and tying these concepts back to the main subject of the book, CRSA. Another asset of the book is that it exposes the work of academics whose work may not necessarily be as well-known as Lefebvre. In addition, most of the chapters build upon one another, making for a quick and interesting read. Although previous knowledge of the theories is useful, it does not prevent a novice in the field from being able to understand and engage with the material.

On the other hand, readers expecting to gain a deeper understanding of CRT will not find it in the pages of this book. Instead, they will discover possible applications of CRT in the analysis of spatial constructions. It is made clear from the beginning that this book is not for CRT beginners, but for those who already have a working knowledge of the theory. Neither is this a book for a spatial theory beginner. The topics within the book can appeal to a classroom teacher looking to create an equitable space in her classroom, to a graduate student thinking about spatial theory, and to a professional scholar looking at the possibilities of applying CRT analysis to new areas. This collection offers a strong sample of how a spatial lens can enrich educational research by critically highlighting what is happening not only inside of our classrooms, but also within our communities.

Author

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