

Nicholas D. Hartlep. (2011 September). Review of Critical Race Theory Matters: Education and Ideology by Zamudio, M. M.; Russell, C.; Rios, F. A. & Bridgeman, J. L., *International Journal of Educational Policies*, 5(1), 47-51.

BOOK REVIEW

Zamudio, M. M.; Russell, C.; Rios, F. A. & Bridgeman, J. L. (2010). *Critical Race Theory Matters: Education and Ideology*. New York, NY: Routledge. ISBN-10: 0415996740 ISBN-13: 978-0415996747

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Many people in America believe that the United States has entered a “post-racial” era since its citizens have elected their first African American President. However, after reading this book, you quickly learn that this “post-racial” rhetoric clamor is simply racist doublespeak. Believing that Obama’s election ushered America into a post-racial era is preposterous and merely “colorblindness” in a newer but simpler form. Many readers of *International Journal of Educational Policies* will enjoy and profit from reading this introductory book on critical race theory (CRT). Why? Because critical race theory is something that is not just confined to the United States, but has become widely used on a global scale: in Australia (McDonald, 2003), Canada (Aylward, 1999), and the United Kingdom (Gillborn, 2008).

Despite that the book is short, only 180 pages, it still packs a potent punch. The book has three parts, in total 14 chapters. Part I discusses CRT concepts and how they can be used in education. The chapters in this part not only challenge the existence of a U.S. meritocracy, but go further by asserting that “racial inequities determine the educational experiences of minority children and youth” (p. 16). Accompanying the widespread belief that a meritocracy exists is an almost prosaic subscription to colorblindness. The volume’s authors discuss the role colorblind policies play in maintaining and extending racial inequality at instructional levels. And while meritocracy segues nicely into colorblindness, colorblindness leaks into rhetoric of “post-racialism” (p. 25) which authorizes a passive retreat from race.

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Part II covers the topics of educational policies and practices and how to use a CRT approach to understand schooling. The use of CRT to understand educational policies and practices is one means to achieving the goal of equitable education and schooling; it is not the goal itself. This means that knowing about and talking about inequality is not sufficient to stop micro- and macro-level policies that are damaging to people and communities of color. This part of the book discusses big-ticket policies such as: (de)segregation, bilingualism, No Child Left Behind (read: No Child Left Bilingual), and affirmative action. Notwithstanding, I believe that this specific section would have been much stronger if the authors had cited more scholarship on affirmative action (e.g., see pp. 79-90) policy. Educational affirmative action is importantly contentious and hotly debated since some believe it to be “reverse discrimination.” The authors do an adequate job quelling the idea that affirmative action is a hand-out by citing the fact that whites are the primary beneficiaries of the policy, especially women. However, the authors could have discussed where Asian Americans fit within the black-white binary framing of affirmative action. As “honorary whites” (Tuan, 1998), where do Asian Americans fit within this discourse? Mari Matsuda’s (e.g. 1993) work would have been a welcomed addition to this section, and would have filled the lacuna in the CRT literature that this book presents.

Part III consists of narratives of the oppressed. The chapters in this section are less polemic, than paragon for how majoritarian stock stories are (1) “intellectually dishonest” (p. 134) and (2) not apolitical as they are manufactured and sold to be. The importance of counter narration is that “[c]ounter narratives are important for the way they help counteract stereotypes and expose the contingent nature of presumed universal truths” (p. 145). A powerful counter narrative the volume’s authors could have explored would be the “model minority myth” that continues to proliferate in mainstream channels and discourse.

The volume’s assembled authors racially and culturally represent various areas of CRT (TribalCrit, Crit, LatCrit)—clearly this is a strength. Many books on CRT do not have racial representative authors from distinct splinter groups of CRT. However, the book would have been more unique and helpful it had included the voices of Asian Americans. AsianCrit was rarely given attention; this is the tendency of many books on CRT. Presenting AsianCrit voices and narratives would have made the book distinctive in content and in focus. Indeed, the book is weaker than it had to be. By including Asian American perspectives, this book would have been strengthened; especially Part III of the book, which is dedicated entirely to narratives. Why should not Asian American narratives be included? Was this simply an errant oversight?

The authors mention in the introduction of the book that “Part III challenges the master narratives in education from American Indian, African American, Chicano, and Latina perspectives” and conclude by saying that “[i]n doing so, this section exemplifies the tools that CRT practitioners use to talk back to dominant ideologies” (p. 10). I need not mention, but clearly, Asian Americans are absent in this book. Further, as I continued to read, I only encountered a handful of references to Asian American issues, and the majority of these were made in passing. Closer examination of the book’s bibliography and index substantiates my criticism; much AsianCrit scholarship is missing (e.g., Chang, 1993, 1999; Teranishi, 2002a). Chang (1999)

writes that critical race scholarship tends to focus on everyone other than Asian Americans, particularly the black-white racial binary. This becomes problematic because many consider Asian Americans to not be oppressed.

Lauded as “model minorities” (Lew, 20006) and sometimes “super minorities” (Teranishi, 2002b), Asian Americans are indeed oppressed and if I have the temerity to say, are an extremely marginalized and underrepresented population of people (Takaki, 1998). Currently 1.5% of K-12 teachers in the United States are Asian American (Teranishi, 2010). The United States Department of Education (2011) has instituted an Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions (AANAPISI) program. AANAPISI is a discretionary and competitive grants program that provides grants and related assistance to Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-serving institutions to enable such institutions to improve and expand their capacity to serve Asian Americans and Native American Pacific Islanders and low-income individuals. As of 2010, twenty-seven institutions of higher education have been designated as AANAPISI by the Department of Education: 19 in California, 2 in Hawaii, 2 in New York, 2 in Washington, 1 in Illinois, and 1 in Guam (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). While the AANAPISI is a step in the right direction for Asian Americans, it does not do enough to resolve the contentious model minority myth, especially for those Asian Americans who do not attend these institutions of higher education.

Readers of *IJEP* ought to be “reading the word and the world” (Freire & Macedo, 1987). This CRT book should not be treated any differently. While the book is highly avant-garde seeing as each author represents multiple races and lives of oppressed groups, it still could have gone further in terms of inclusivity and voice to reach the “borderlands” (Anzaldúa, 1987). Reaching the “borderlands” is desirable since CRT is a “standpoint theory” (Chang, 1999). By limiting the voices of an invisible group like Asian Americans, the authors unintentionally weakened their book’s objective: to challenge the master narrative. Notwithstanding, this book is helpful and highly usable, especially for readers unfamiliar with CRT. The book is relevant not only to U.S. scholars, students, and strident supporters of social justice, but is accessible and applicable to an international audience as well.

Many *IJEP* readers will be in league with the book’s suppositions. This book review would not be complete if it did not mention that the book is dedicated to the book’s first author, Margaret Zamudio, who passed away on Christmas day in 2009. Although *Critical race theory matters* was her first and last book (Zamudio, Russell, Rios, & Bridgeman, 2010), Zamudio leaves earlier scholarship for interested critical race academicians (e.g., see McGriff, Zamudio, Connolly, & Rios, 2004; Zamudio, 2001, 2002, 2004; Zamudio & Rios, 2006).

Acknowledgment

I would like to thank Nicholas Ozment for his comments and suggestions on early drafts, and the *IJEP* editor for his valuable feedback and assistance in bringing this book review to publication.

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International Journal of Educational Policies

ISSN: 1307-3842

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