

**Book Review: *Critical Race Theory in Education: A Scholar's Journey.*
Gloria Ladson-Billings. Teachers College Press, 2021, 233 pp.**

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The aptly chosen title for this book points the reader to what they will encounter as they read Gloria Ladson-Billings' compilation of writings on Critical Race Theory (CRT) in education. Ladson-Billings provides nine writings that give the reader a sense of the main areas of scholarship, challenges, and applications to the study of education. Through reading her previously published works across nearly three decades, it is easy to see the development of ideas and evolving applications of CRT by Ladson-Billings and other scholars. Many things have changed in the United States since Ladson-Billings began her journey with CRT in the early 1990s.

However, CRT is as relevant to the field of education now as it was when she first called for its application nearly three decades ago. It continues to offer a useful lens through which to analyze significant political and social developments in an educational context—whether in making sense of the political trajectory of the United States that saw the election of Barack Obama followed by Donald Trump or the current spate of laws passed to prohibit discussing racism in the classroom. And as Ladson-Billings makes clear throughout her compiled writings, it is certain to remain relevant for the foreseeable future.

Ladson-Billings organizes the book into three parts, sorting the writings thematically rather than chronologically. This decision makes sense conceptually, as chapter one begins with her seminal writing with William Tate IV, "Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education," from 1995. This is followed by chapter two, her 2013 article "Critical Race Theory--What It Is Not!", which critiques some of the scholarships that emerged in the two decades following her call for applying CRT to education. This organization allows the reader to understand her initial scholarly aims and the challenges that followed in seeking to use a new theoretical framework in the field of educational research.

The book's second section is titled "Issues of Inequality" and explores how Critical Race Theory sheds light on inequalities within the American education system. The writings in this section are from 2006, 2012, 2003, and 2004, respectively, offering significant insight into Ladson-Billings' thoughts roughly one decade into bringing CRT into educational research. Chapter three takes on the deficit-minded thinking surrounding the "achievement gap" and proposes a new framing of educational inequity.

Chapter four explores the many ways in which race shapes educational outcomes and experiences. Chapter five critiques multicultural education and offers a framework for how it can use CRT to analyze educational issues. Chapter six, the final one in this section, analyzes an often underexplored issue in American education, the costs of the ruling in *Brown v. Board*. By applying a CRT lens, Ladson-Billings identifies how despite the good intentions of many involved in the decision, the ruling in *Brown* was based on several racist assumptions and motivated in no small part by geopolitical concerns. She also details how the hopes of the ruling were betrayed due to recalcitrance by racist White Americans, actions that have shaped (and continue to shape) the state of education for Black students.

The third and final section of the book explores epistemology and methodology, with chapter seven focusing on how CRT can help educational researchers respond to dehumanizing attitudes and practices routinely found in mainstream scholarship and American culture writ large. Chapter eight addresses how CRT remains as relevant as ever, despite the claims of many people that America is now in a "post-racial" existence. Ladson-Billings illustrates how racial inequity has morphed but not disappeared, continuing to hamper Black students' opportunities for success. Throughout this section, she offers a compelling exploration of how CRT can be applied to research and to making sense of the larger society in which Americans live.

The book closes with a postscript, "The Social Funding of Race: The Role of Schooling," originally published in 2018, in which Ladson-Billings traces the many ways in which race is learned and reinforced in American culture broadly and schools in particular. This is often found in the assumptions teachers make about their students, blind spots they have in how they discuss topics surrounding race, and how the curriculum is structured. The postscript concludes with a call for teachers to apply the principles of CRT in service of working to bring about a culture that "although never intended to extend to non-whites, women, or poor people, belongs to them just the same" (Ladson-Billings, 2021, p. 279).

This compilation of Ladson-Billings' writings vividly demonstrates the varied applications of CRT in the field of education and how it offers a useful framework for making sense of ongoing challenges and inequities. Exploring her ideas and applications of CRT across multiple decades will help readers understand her scholarly journey. However, this book offers little new insight, explicit connection, or commentary on her past ideas. The fifteen-page introduction is the only new material; everything that follows, including the postscript, was previously published. As a result, chapters sometimes feel somewhat disjointed, and the reader will need to fill in missing context due to the original dates of chapters varying by a decade or more. Another challenge inherent to the compilation format of the book is the repetitive nature of certain anecdotes and ideas.

A reader well-versed in the tenets of CRT will find portions of some chapters redundant, as it is clear that the article in its original form was written assuming it needed to explain the central precepts of CRT for the first time. Another example is the repetitive use of the O.J. Simpson trial to illustrate the salience of race in American culture, which is used in chapters two, five, and seven. While each reference fits well within the structure of the original article, by the third instance, the reader is likely able to skim ahead due to the previous discussions from the two earlier chapters.

The quality of Ladson-Billings' scholarship and communication is evident throughout this book. Her ideas come through clearly in each chapter. Upon finishing the book, the reader should come away with a deeper understanding of her scholarly aims and hopes for how CRT might be applied to the field of education to bring about a more equitable and just world. This text offers a useful sample of essential writings by an incredibly skilled and influential scholar. Anyone unfamiliar with the scholarship surrounding CRT and education would be well served by reading this book. The only substantive critique that can be made is that the reader gets too little of Ladson-Billings' reflections, limited only to a brief introduction. Despite this limitation, the book should be a meaningful resource to many scholars seeking to better understand CRT's origins, goals, and applications and how an influential and foundational academic researcher has conceptualized the scholarship surrounding it.