Critical Geography and the Spatial Nature of Race

Abstract

Critical geography is based upon the principle that questions about spatial relations, which refer to how an object located within a particular space relates to another object, are important because political behavior is embedded in socio-political structures based on ideas about space (Connon & Simpson, 2018). Critical geographers suggest that alternative ways of thinking about space have the potential to change fundamental ideas, theories, and approaches that dominate the study of politics (Connon & Simpson, 2018). They share three topics with critical race theorists: the all-encompassing nature of race, the debate over the primacy of the black/white binary, and the utility of narrative (Price, 2010). There is an assertion that race and racism are undergoing a renaissance in geography, in large part due to theoretical developments spanning various social sciences, and characterizes these developments as anti-essentialist perspectives on race, which deconstruct race as a naturalized hierarchy of biologically distinctive human groups while exploring processes of racialization, which place individuals and groups within racial categories and have material effects in terms of the unequal distribution of power and wealth (Price, 2010; Connon & Simpson, 2018). According to Saad Saleem Bhatti and Elisabete A. Silva (2018), spatial patterns typically examine ecological components and must begin to explore the urban areas or processes involving population movements, socioeconomic variables, or governance structures (Herold et al., 2005; Schneider and Woodcock, 2008; Schwarz, 2010). This study uses the Critical Geography and Critical Race Theory (CRT) framework to explain how the various education, property, labor, and healthcare laws and policies impact the spatial patterns of African American communities. The ongoing research stems from CRT and Critical Policy Analysis used to explain race and racism in school funding (Caldwell et al. 2022), where the findings motivated this study to explain how policies impact African Americans from various contexts outside of education.