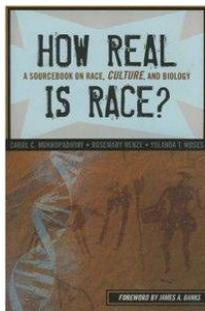


Professional Book Review

Mukhopadhyay, C. C., Henze, R., & Moses, Y. T. (2007). *How Real is Race: A Sourcebook on Race, Culture and Biology*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield. 316 pp., ISBN: 978-1578865611 (pbk). \$29.95.

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It is hard to talk about race in the United States. It is even harder to teach about it. Conversations about race are fraught with tension: teachers of color may worry that they are seen as angry or having an agenda, while White teachers may be uncomfortable talking about subjects that they feel inexperienced. In the United States, in particular, those raising issues of race and inequality are often accused of “making it worse” by focusing on difference or of being “hypersensitive” to unintended slights. For all these (and more) reasons, it is helpful to have a pedagogical source like Mukhopadhyay, Henze and Moses’ book, *How Real Is Race: A Sourcebook on Race, Culture and Biology*. Each author is a professor of anthropology with years of teaching experience at every level from university, to adult ESL, to K-12. Mukhopadhyay and Moses were key participants in the American Anthropological Association’s public information project on race. Henze has worked in English as a Second Language, language preservation, and teacher training. Together they draw on their personal and professional experience to produce an extremely helpful work for all of us seeking to bring greater understanding around the issue of race.

The book is divided into three parts: The Fallacy of Race as Biology, Culture Creates Race, and Race and Hot-Button Issues in School. Within these sections, smaller chapters deal with more specific questions. At nearly 300 pages, the book is substantial and could serve as a textbook for a college-level course on race and ethnic relations or race and education. What makes the book unique, however, is its structure allowing teachers in a variety of fields to teach the sections in any order or even as stand-alone lessons.

For example, Chapter 1 of Part I (The Fallacy of Race as Biology) covers “Why Contemporary Races are Not Scientifically Valid.” In a helpful dozen pages, the chapter lays out the scientific problem with “race” as a category in human biology/taxonomy. Following the text is a bulleted summary of the key concepts from the chapter. The next five pages then provide four detailed “activity plans” for lessons in the classroom. These could be used for high school or university students (or adults in a professional setting) or adapted for younger students. The teacher could use one or all of them. Web site URLs embedded in each activity give directions to resources needed or helpful for the various activities.

The chapter comes early in the book as a lead-in to later concepts of culture and social problems around race. For a teacher of science, however, this short chapter could provide a way to develop a lesson around genetics, taxonomy, or any number of other scientific concepts related to the question of race. The historical, anthropological, sociological, and economic aspects of race explained in other chapters provide an important resource to answer student questions or simply make those science teachers feel better equipped to enter the conversation; they would not need to present all those chapters for the lesson to stand well on its own.

Every chapter is constructed in this way, allowing teachers to present chapters in any order, adapting them to the needs of the class. In particular, the learning activities make each short chapter a potential lesson or unit of lessons. Throughout the text, detailed lesson plans provide the resources needed to engage students who may be reluctant, wary, or even a little hostile to learning about race and inequality.

Written in an accessible yet scholarly style, the book combines explanation and background with engaging activities, web-based resources, and discussion questions. Teachers are not left to track down their own lesson ideas, nor are they assumed to be familiar with the issues involved. Rather, the book supplies virtually everything a teacher would need, at any level, to engage students in a wide range of issues around race.

Naturally, the inclusion of novel elements such as the activity plans means that other elements are underdeveloped or left out. This is not a terribly sophisticated book in terms of theory. Scholars who have worked in the field of critical race studies will find little that is surprising or new in this book. This is not a criticism, however, since the authors (who have written sophisticated treatments of race theory elsewhere) are aiming this book to a different audience. This work draws from sophisticated theory and complex historical contexts and makes it accessible to a wider audience. The additional reading provided in the appendix would direct a reader looking for more in-depth treatment of the issues to appropriate sources.

The authors demonstrate their awareness of the challenges teachers face by providing additional reference material, such as a section giving details about how the chapters and units align with national educational standards, a chart graphically presenting the activities in the book and their corresponding learning outcomes, and a well-designed index.

The United States is moving into a new era in our conversations about race. On the one side are unambiguous signs of progress, such as the election of the first African-American (or “mixed race”) President. There are notable shifts in the demographic landscape, such as the growth of the Latino population to surpass African-Americans as the largest minority group in the country. At the same time, deeply intractable inequalities in educational opportunity, economic measures, and social opportunities corresponding to racial and gender categories remain. The need for conversations about race has not gone away, though those conversations must become more complex. This complexity requires increased attention from well-informed and well-equipped educators to

address questions of race with students. This book is a welcome resource toward that end that should serve the educational community well for years to come.