

Fall 1988

## Review of Michael Bradshaw, *Regions and Regionalism in the United States*

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Stoddard, Robert, "Review of Michael Bradshaw, *Regions and Regionalism in the United States*" (1988). *Geography Faculty Publications*. 11.

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Published in JOURNAL OF CULTURAL GEOGRAPHY 9:1 (Fall/Winter 1988), pp. 97-99.  
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Michael Bradshaw. *Regions and Regionalism in the United States*.  
Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1988, x and 187 pp.

The terms *region* and *regionalism* carry various meanings, so the book's emphasis is not conveyed by just the title. Unfortunately this confusion persists, even after reading the book.

The usual meaning of *region*—i.e., an areal category in a classification scheme of earth space—apparently is not the concept held by the author. Although he suggests that “most regional divisions are devised for a particular purpose” (p. 27), his other comments do not support the idea that regionalization is a way of organizing locational diversity into areal units which minimize internal variations and maximize differences between these spatial classes.

Occasionally the author seems to accept the view of regions as essentially distinct entities that exist independent of scholars’ perceptions of spatial differences. Such is evidenced by the following statements: “The combination of the artefacts and activities provides a region with its distinctive ‘geography’ at any period of time” (pp. 6-7); “The US is moving toward a homogeneous society in which regions as such do not exist. . .” (p. 59). Nevertheless, this is not a book about *the* regions of the United States.

The term is also applied by economists and regional scientists to areas, usually consisting of one or more administrative units that are regarded as reasonably homogeneous, for purposes of data aggregation, analysis, and planning. This appears to be the meaning intended by these references: “Regions are subnational units of variable size, but within the United States typically comprise parts of all or several states” (p. 3); “Regions can also be divided into small, local units” (p. 7).

Except for this confusion about the nature of “regions” and, hence, about its unifying theme, the text has few distractions. Readers will be surprised to see “personal space” defined as “bounded by common movements such as journeys to work and those for shopping or leisure activities” and to read that “each State has two houses” (thus ignoring Nebraska’s unicameral legislature). Also, the diagrams in Chapter 3 do not seem to depict two-dimension relationships among the components. Nevertheless, the text is written clearly (in British English), the maps are pertinent, the index is helpful, and the various subtopics (see below) are presented succinctly.

After reviewing some familiar regionalizations of United States (e.g., the Census divisions, Trewartha’s climatic regions, Zelinsky’s cultural area, and ones in regional geography textbooks), the author does a nice job of describing the historical conditions that produced regional differences within the United States. Also cultural geographers will appreciate the contrasts he draws between “the Frostbelt vs. the Sunbelt” and “the East vs. the West.” One chapter summarizes factors that lead to greater homogeneity within the United States since World War II; another reviews the distribution of poverty, both across large rural areas and within small urban districts. In greater detail, he focuses on the history, functional relationships, and future prospects of the Tennessee Valley Authority, the Appalachian Regional Commission, and other

governmentally defined planning regions. He concludes with a plea for more “regional studies” and their application to public policy.

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