

Book Reviews

Damien W Riggs (ed.), *The Psychic Life of Racism in Gay Men's Communities*, Lexington Books: Lanham, MD, 2017; 172 pp.: (Hbk), ISBN: 978-1-4985-3714-8, \$90

The Psychic Life of Racism in Gay Men's Communities sets out to address the understudied area of racism within communities of gay men. This book traces forms of racism as they appear throughout gay communities from religious-based Islamophobia to online dating and so-called “preferences.” An ambitious volume, the authors aim to map racisms within gay communities in order to disrupt the narratives of homogeneity and veiled unity among gay white men. Each chapter addresses some form of the racisms present in the western gay world by examining how erotic racisms function at the interpersonal and societal levels. Taken together, the book disrupts narratives of homogeneous unity and unconditional acceptance among gay communities and instead posits a more nuanced interpretation that shows just how white privilege and notions of racial superiority are leveraged even by (heteronormatively marginalized) white gay men.

Across eight chapters, the history and contemporary forms of gay racism are analyzed through a mix of theoretically and empirically driven critique. Most importantly, the volume goes beyond simple discussions of racial encounters interpersonally and engages a larger discourse of racial hegemony at work within gay communities. Instead of situating gay communities at odds with racism in larger society, Riggs sets out to reconsider the ways that racism operates within gay communities. Most importantly, the chapters of this text aim to reprioritize analyses of gay racism, which often fail to analyze how axes of power, privilege, and domination operate from within. Even in its structure, the volume aims not simply to be organized by sections that focus on interpersonal racism or political racisms, but rather the *intentionally* arbitrary order serves to reinforce just how intertwined these gay racisms are.

The first chapter by Callendar, Holt, and Newman serves to delve deeply into the conceptualization of “gay racism” and offers historical and contemporary takes on the meaning of the term. In their discussion, the authors draw out the differences and similarities between gay racism and racism outside of gay communities while attending to the role of political and activist organizations in the facilitation of racism’s lives among gay men. Scholars interested in not only manifestations of racism, but also its negotiation will find Jesus Gregorio Smith’s chapter on white gay men’s denial of racism and Sulaimon Giwa’s chapter on the negotiation of racism by African Canadians of particular note. Smith uses online data to illustrate

how “white people, regardless of gender or orientation, rhetorically perpetuate claims to supremacy” (p. 106). Giwa’s focus group data from Canada’s Ottawa region reveal the “resistance and coping strategies employed by gay men from the African diaspora to deal with racism-base discrimination” (p. 90). Several chapters address experiences faced by Asian gay men and the ways that Orientalism operates in “the West.” Jacks Cheng’s chapter draws on Edward Said’s *Orientalism* to theoretically explore gay orientalism and its relation to forms of racism experienced by gay Asian men. In analysis of geo-spatial hookup applications, Emerich Daroya explores the ways that “erotic capital” and “erotic values [are] differentially distributed” (p. 68) often explicitly favoring white men over other races. Authors Rivera and Maglalang aim to “recenter Asian American voices in the conversation about homonationalism and queer communities in the United States” (p. 124). In their chapter, they use their voices to highlight the fraught tensions between Asian Americans’ sense of nationalism and a perpetual discourse of Asians as the forever foreigner in the USA. The remaining two chapters of the book tackle aspects of Islamophobia in Britain, Australia, and Canada. Ibrahim Abraham outlines how dominant discourses of the Muslim as “inherently violent and fanatical” (p. 15) can result in Muslim gay men finding themselves outcast from gay communities, particularly by white men. The chapter by Sonny Dhoot explicitly examines the experiences and role of Queer Muslim women in Sex-Ed debates in Ontario as it pertains to homonationalism. In so doing, Dhoot raises the question of the positionality and relative locations of queer women of color in respect to predominately white male queerness.

Riggs’s Introduction and Conclusion provide necessary bookends to this collection of essays. Expecting this project of mapping to include all forms of racism within gay communities in only eight chapters is unrealistic as to do so would be undoubtedly an impossible task. Riggs addresses the gaps and further research imagined following this volume in the conclusion. Future entries into the study of gay racisms would benefit from a deeper disaggregation into meanings of “the West” and might highlight the unique experiences of marginalized gay men of color within particular nation-states.

This book should appeal to an array of potential readers from social psychology, sociology, critical race studies, queer studies, and masculinity studies. Scholars in these fields will find that as much as the book offers insight into various racisms within gay communities, *The Psychic Life of Racism in Gay Men’s Communities* paves directions for the future of research into queer communities contending with various forms of racial discrimination under the guise of “personal preference” and a larger political discourse that devalues people of color. Thus, this book is a critical contribution to current scholarship on racism and will direct research on the myriad ways that racisms come to bear on the lives of the multiply marginalized. As part of Lexington Book’s series, *Critical Perspectives on the Psychology of Sexuality, Gender, and Queer Studies*, this

volume is a strong first offering and sparks anticipation of more critical scholarship from the editors.

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DOI: 10.1177/1363460719872719

Joe Rollins, *Legally Straight: Sexuality, Childhood, and the Cultural Value of Marriage*, New York University Press: New York, 2018; 208 pp.: ISBN 9780814775981 (cloth), \$50

Marriage equality, or the fight to extend marital rights to same-sex couples, represents a significant socio-legal change in the USA. Within my relatively short lifetime, homosexuality has gone from a criminalized act to inclusion in one of the most normative institutions, that is, so long as it's practiced by a monogamous couple adhering to all other social norms. This rapid shift in social standing has not escaped the notice of social scientists, many of whom have studied the meaning of marriage to same-sex couples, particularly in the field of legal consciousness. Fewer have tackled the question of how exactly this change occurred so rapidly. This is the question Joe Rollins takes up in *Legally Straight*, in which he examines the internal logic of court decisions to explain how same-sex couples were extended marital rights, focusing in particular on the procreation argument put forth by opponents.

Rollins argues that the procreation argument consists of normative assertions about heterosexuality, gender, reproduction, and marriage. First introduced in the 1970s, the argument received little elaboration in court decisions since homosexuality was widely viewed as antithetical to procreation and child rearing. By the 1990s lesbians and gay men had achieved some political access and many same-sex couples were raising children through adoption or assisted reproductive technology. Thanks in part to these advances, the courts were forced to scrutinize what was ultimately an unstable foundation for limiting marital rights. What emerged from opponents to marriage equality was an argument that heterosexuals needed marriage in order to provide a stable home for children resulting from unplanned pregnancies; same-sex couples did not need marriage as their parenthood was always planned. 'Taken to its logical conclusion, the procreation argument