

Vijay Agnew, ed.

Interrogating Race and Racism.

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This collection of articles addresses the concept of new racism proposed by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri in *Empire* (2000). The concept refers to a reality displaying appearances and policies of anti-racism that simultaneously conceals a racialized system of control. The book also examines the relation of race and racism to immigration, and to a lesser degree to the nation and identity. Some of its chapters endeavor, with varying degrees of success, to examine anew the concept of race itself.

The book begins and ends with personal accounts offered by the book's editor (who has also authored a tenth chapter), Vijay Agnew. In the introductory chapter, she begins by recounting her experience of becoming a feminist upon entering graduate school in Canada as an immigrant from India in the 1970s. The final chapter is an interview she conducted with Frances Henry, an academic who, "[a]lthough she is white, ... is married to a black man, has adult mixed-race children, and has spent her academic career studying racism against black people" (p. 389). In her Introduction, she ushers us into what appears to be a theoretical confusion about such issues as the meaning of race, racism, and racialization or racialized. She favors racialization (or racialized), a term which she suggests could be interchangeably and advantageously used in place of the terms race and racism (p. 10). Good intentions and reliable reference sources are not, however, always sufficient to drive home the desired point. When the editor, referring to sociologist Stephen Small, states that "The term *racialization* refers to the process that produces and constructs the meaning of race and to the structures that accompany such a process" (9), one expects her to apply that understanding. Instead, she uses the ordinary concept of race (white people, black people) as if it were a natural thing and even introduces unconventional "races" such as: "... his secretary, an Anglo-Indian (a term used in India for those who are of mixed race)" (26). The author stresses that "[a]ll the papers in this collection use the word race as a socially constructed category" (9). Peter S. Li and Sharryn J. Aiken are entirely consistent in that attempt; they even visually/symbolically express their rejection of the concept of race by putting the term into quotation marks. Such consistency is not visible in any of the editor's contributions to this volume, as some of her questions to Frances Henry illustrate: "In researching and thinking about the Other, what have you learned about yourself, particularly about being white?" (399). Similarly, her statement identifying the book's contributors by their "racial identities" ("The chapters included in this volume have been written by individuals with varied racial identities: whites, blacks, Chinese, South Asians, and Jews" (8)) raises questions about the genuineness of her notion of race as an artificial construct. A reader can't but be confused by her uncritical usage of the basic concepts which she promises to analyze and challenge.

The article "Contradictions of 'Racial' Discourse" by Peter S. Li, is a compelling explanation of how a democratic society can appear to reject racism and discrimination while at the same time "condoning 'racial' signification" (52). The chapter's (only) note provides not only important information for understanding the article's main point but also a concise lesson on the concept of race. There the author clarifies that he uses quotation marks around the terms race and racial in order to convey the problematic nature of these concepts and to demonstrate that academic discussion about them "does not represent accepting their scientific legitimacy." Significantly, he adds that "the repeated usage of these terms without quotation marks conditions readers to accept them as conceptually valid and socially proper." The author's application of his theoretical position by marking terms race and racial to denote their scientific invalidity represents an admirable fidelity to

intellectual principles which hopefully may inspire and encourage us all to do the same. As examples of normative inconsistency, he uses public opinion polls and official government reports on immigration to illustrate the contradiction between Canadian society's declared commitment to multiculturalism and democracy on the one hand, and its complicity with racism through carefully constructed syntax and seemingly neutral terms on the other. By introducing into his analysis the concept of 'Racial' Discourse Li is able to explain the existence of racial attitudes and racism in a society which avoids openly "race"-related or "race"-specific messages.

While a majority of the articles are consistent in their usage of terms relating to the concept of race, confusion similar to that in the introductory chapter appears in the articles about racial discrimination in nursing and about the Jewish Museum in Berlin. Indeed, it is not clear why the latter essay is included in this collection at all, unless perhaps it is for its opening pages where a reader will encounter an additional confusing and, as commonly understood, erroneous view, namely that the Jews are a race (298), along with the author's attempt to be critical towards that very notion as practiced in Nazi Germany.

Gillian Creese, who skillfully describes the process of racialization in Canada without relying on the term race, presents the fate of women immigrating from sub-Saharan Africa to Canada — where, she stresses, the realities of "othering" collide with the public discourse of an open, pluralistic society. Sharryn J. Aiken methodically and efficiently challenges "one of the central myths of Canada" as "an egalitarian, pluralist society free from the scourge of racism" (57) from a similar point of view but through an analysis of slavery and Canadian constitutionalism.

In their thorough analysis of the earning gaps for Canadian-born ethnic minorities, Krishna Pendakur and Ravi Pendakur prefer to use "broad ethnic categories" like Aboriginal People, visible minorities and white (p. 148) to "race." They offer extremely interesting results showing that economic inequality is on the rise but also that there are telling nuances in analyzing the disparity issue.

Issues of citizenship and racism draw S. Aiken and J. McDonald's attention to the relationship between racism and immigration law. Both emphasize that "the state continues to play the most important role in immigration policy and implementation" (56) and that "immigration law remains an important (albeit) contested site for states to exercise their sovereign power over markets and people" (57). It appears that the Canadian cases described by McDonald together with her example of current developments within the European Union support the idea that an increasing number of agencies outside the state are active in defining citizens' rights. That movement, however, as these articles demonstrate, is far from being widespread or even considerably influential.

The chapters in this collection vary in style, format, and successful realization of the stated goal of interrogating race and racism. Despite some insightful analysis and effectively detailed studies of particular groups or situations, rather than countering the widespread inconsistency and theoretical confusion about "race," this volume on the whole contributes to it.

Sreca Perunovic

John Jay College of Criminal Justice
sperunovic@jjay.cuny.edu

Sreca Perunovic is Assistant Professor at John Jay College of Criminal Justice (Sociology). She has published articles on race, ethnicity, ethnic identity, and nationalism. Her interests include reconciliation in post-conflict societies, immigration, citizenship, refugee, human rights and international justice.

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