Book Review

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Getting Respect: Responding to Stigma and Discrimination in the United States, Brazil & Israel

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Getting Respect offers a rich and deeply textured portrait of how marginalized ethnoracial groups experience and respond to discrimination and stigmatization in the United States, Brazil, and Israel. Drawing on over 400 in-depth interviews with African Americans, Black Brazilians, Ethiopian Israelis, Arab Palestinians, and Mizrahim, the authors (Michèle Lamont, Graziella Moraes Silva, Jessica S. Welburn, Joshua Guetzkow, Nissim Mizrachi, Hanna Herzog and Elisa Reis) make visible the various textures and tones of ethnoracial exclusion in various national contexts. While discrimination and stigma are a fact of life for all these groups, their salience, and individuals’ responses to them, vary based on distinctive national conditions. In particular, in order to explain cross-national differences, the authors point to three sets of factors: cultural repertoires, groupness, and historical, institutional and economic features.

Among the numerous significant contributions that this book makes to understanding ethnoracial exclusion is the distinction between discrimination and stigmatization. While racial and ethnic marginalization is often understood through the frame of discrimination, or restricting access to resources and opportunities, the authors’ interviewees more commonly experience stigmatization, or being ignored, overlooked, and insulted. Through analytically elaborating stigmatization, and documenting its commonality across these national contexts, the authors demonstrate how ethnoracial exclusion continues to be a prominent feature of contemporary life.

Another valuable contribution of Getting Respect is the in-depth exploration of ethnoracial exclusion encountered by people of African descent. By studying three groups of African descent (African Americans, Black Brazilians, and Ethiopian Israelis) in three considerably different national contexts, new light is shed on the boundaries of blackness. For example, in comparison to Black Brazilians who live in a country with more salient socioeconomic boundaries, African Americans are less likely to explain discrimination by class. In contrast to African Americans who reside in a nation with
stronger legal tools to redress discrimination, Ethiopian Israelis are more critical of using the law as a mechanism to fight exclusion. In addition to offering new insights about the boundaries of blackness cross-nationally, *Getting Respect* also sheds light on differences in the ethnoracial exclusion of blacks from varying age cohorts, social classes, and genders. While there are some differences across these groups in the USA—for instance, middle-class blacks are more likely to see themselves as stereotyped as poor than working class blacks, black men are more likely than black women to mention being seen as threatening, and older blacks are more likely than younger blacks to report being denied opportunities—there were fewer than the authors initially expected. Given the similarity of experiences across age, class, and gender, they suggest that for African Americans, race is the most salient boundary of exclusion.

The case of Arab Palestinians also presents a fascinating case for better understanding ethnoracial exclusion across and within national contexts. As with the authors’ main comparison group for African Americans and Black Brazilians, the experiences of Arab Palestinians illustrate how the nature of, and responses to, ethnoracial exclusion vary cross-nationally. For example, while exclusion of the former groups is grounded in the history of slavery, as well as race and phenotype, that of the latter emerges out of the legacy of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Similarly, Arab Palestinians more often describe being cast as ‘enemies within’.

*Getting Respect* also excels in the documentation of discrimination and stigmatization in the context of consumption. While there is a vast literature on racial and ethnic economic inequality, scholarship on inequality within the sphere of consumption is far more limited. Here, the authors sketch in depth how consumption is a site of racial and ethnic discrimination across the world. Participants talk about how they receive unequal treatment and disrespect when they are dining in restaurants, shopping in stores, and seeking housing. This marginalization demonstrates how even when racial and ethnic minorities have the economic means to purchase needed and desired goods and services, their access may be blocked or their experiences soured.

With its global focus and consideration of a range of social categories, *Getting Respect* raises important new questions about racial and ethnic boundaries. One fruitful direction for future research is to compare discrimination and stigmatization among immigrant and native blacks in the USA. Of particular interest is whether or not the former draw on different cultural repertoires—especially those that are more global in nature—to explain their experiences. Another important area for future research is comparison of exclusion among black Christians and Muslims in the USA. In sum, *Getting Respect* powerfully complicates and illuminates our understanding of the contours of ethnoracial exclusion. It is essential reading for cultural sociologists with an interest in race and ethnicity.