

in decision-making that is strictly local in scope and effects: in the words of the authors, "a Faustian bargain at best" (p. 73). The authors claim that NGOs, unwittingly or consciously, serve as agents of imperialism. Their activities promote self-help rather than resistance against capitalist development and neoliberal globalization.

Unfortunately, the authors provide little in-depth analysis of the social movements which they believe challenge the neoliberal world order. They conducted some interviews with leaders of social movements, but did not inform the reader of the range of people they interviewed and what questions they asked. Did their interviewees entirely support their views, and if so, why have their voices not been recorded by other social movement scholars?

Also, Petras and Veltmeyer often present data without documenting their sources, and make claims that are factually questionable. For example, they assert that center-left governments have not pursued distributive policies, even though poverty rates and even income inequality have declined in the region under their rule. And in contending that poverty caused, or not resolved, by neoliberalism has driven Latin Americans from their homelands, they note that "In Bolivia, it is estimated that at least 40 percent of the population now lives outside the country. And the same applies to Mexico" (p. 35). I know no basis for such assertions. According to the *Migration and Remittances Factbook*, neither country ranks among the top 30 countries in the world with 11 or more percent of their population having emigrated (although Mexico has the largest number of its citizens living abroad). Ironically, Cuba, which through revolution resisted imperialism, has a higher percent of its population living abroad than either Mexico or Bolivia.

Although collective defiance by workers has been on the decline and although Latin Americans increasingly are voting with their feet, and emigrating rather than collectively contesting imperialist forces at home, the authors place their faith in the Revolutionary Left to bring about a world beyond neoliberalism, capitalism, class exploitation, and imperialism. While providing little evidence to support their assertion, the authors should be commended for alerting scholars to the

need to take macro, global, as well as local, structures and processes into account when attempting to understand contemporary social movements in Latin America. Class dynamics continue to be of consequence, even if they have taken new form and expression in our neoliberal world order.

Racing for Innocence: Whiteness, Gender, and the Backlash Against Affirmative Action, by **Jennifer L. Pierce**. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012. 233pp. \$22.95 paper. ISBN: 9780804778794.

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Out of the shadow of the U.S. Supreme Court's current decision on *Fisher v. University of Texas*—whereby the Court may seal the fate of affirmative action—steps Jennifer L. Pierce's troika analysis of the 1980s and 1990s backlash against affirmative action. *Racing for Innocence* recounts participant observation, discourse analysis of news media and Hollywood films, and an innovative strategy of fiction, that together unpack how legal professionals, employed at a company with a federally mandated affirmative action program, both consciously and unconsciously "... disavow accountability for racist practices and, at the same time, practice racially exclusionary behavior" (p. 9). Pierce bundles a thoroughgoing sociological analysis into five chapters that reads as effortlessly as it educates. The text unravels a knot of misinformation and decades of snarled reactionary discourse to knit a story about how California became an important battleground over race, gender, and the place of remedial policies like affirmative action. The resulting patchwork affords both the seasoned and novice reader with an empirical view of a topic often muddled by erroneous and dyed-in-the-wool opinion.

Chapter One establishes the genesis of a new class of racial victim called "the innocent white male." Rather than point to the host of usual suspects often cited as causal of the white backlash against affirmative action (e.g., the 1973 recession or split labor markets), Pierce argues that narratives of

white male virtue and “reverse discrimination,” coupled with the privileged voices of a few influential anti-affirmative action intellectuals, synthesized and dominated the 1980s and 1990s news cycle. This interpretive environment helped to organize and activate public opinion against affirmative action, as well as helped to form a public memory that misremembered and lionized the innocence of America’s white male working class against the backdrop of a cadre of nonwhite pariahs, possessed of pathology.

Chapter Two changes tack, but only slightly, to examine a larger media discourse. Peirce takes into account a spate of 1980s and 1990s Hollywood films that functioned to further rationalize the white backlash against affirmative action. Pierce examines films such as *Glory* (1989), *Dangerous Minds* (1995), *A Time to Kill* (1996), and *Amistad* (1997) as cinema qua historiographers. She argues that these films retold the history of U.S. race relations from a point of view that deemed white supremacist racism an ancient evil long vanquished by antiracist white elites heroes. For Pierce, this cinematic reframing of race relations labors to reject structural explanations of racial inequality, and in its place, establishes a myth that hard-working white people made life easier for people of color, and that the latter should be grateful to the former. The implicit message is that any type of discrimination must be overcome by the moral and meritocratic efforts of individual do-gooders against the ignorant cadre of overt racists.

Next, Chapters Three and Four uncover the patterns within the personal narratives of white (and overwhelmingly male) lawyers in the “BC Corporation.” Pierce had extraordinary access to this field site. She worked as a litigation paralegal and “covert ethnographer” (p. 12) for BC in the late 1980s whereby she examined corporate documents, engaged in participant observation, and interviewed nearly forty-three of the lawyers who worked in the litigation section of BC. Additionally, in 1999 she located and re-interviewed thirty-three of those original forty-three lawyers.

In these two chapters, three findings seemed to jump off the page. First, only three black lawyers were employed at BC in 1989 and by 1999 they had all left (100 percent turnover). Moreover, only six of the eight

white female lawyers were still employed by 1999 (75 percent turnover). Compared to the 60 percent turnover (only 19 of 32 white men left BC), these rates put into relief the color-blind claims that a court-ordered affirmative action plan had remedied racial issues in BC, and that race and gender no longer influenced anyone’s professional success. Second, many of the female lawyers described both faint and explicit discrimination. They told stories of how their male colleagues often became suspicious of their determination and dedication. Yet simultaneously, many of the white women employed in BC were avid critics of affirmative action even as they were beneficiaries of the system. In so doing, they became covert defenders of white male patriarchy: “. . . in defending against affirmative action, they were simultaneously defending the life chances and livelihoods of men in their lives. They wanted their sons to get into the colleges of their choice and their husband to obtain well-paying jobs without the impediment of government regulation” (p. 117). And third, Pierce aptly demonstrates how white male lawyers are “racing for innocence”; they “disavow responsibility for racist practices at the same time they practice racially exclusionary behavior” (p. 65). Toward this end, Pierce uncovers how the “ideology of meritocracy” functioned as the central frame for explaining success and disparaging failure, whether in consideration of nonwhite employees or women. Overall, these two chapters serve as the animating core of the text, in that they show how the mechanisms of specific interpretive strategies and supposedly color- and gender-blind actions labor to sustain and reproduce a white male dominated organization.

The final chapter provides a fictional story that centers on a black female applicant to a prestigious law firm. As she sits at dinner with two of the firm’s white male colleagues, the scene portrays the difficulties of across the color- and gender-line interactions and the tendency for all parties to hold what Pierce calls “ambivalent racism”—a sense of what *might* lay beneath the surface of late night pleasantries. I interpret this chapter as Pierce’s nod to Critical Race Theory, à la the technique of fictional short story writing best embodied by the late Derrick Bell. However, what made Bell’s technique

so effective is that his settings and characters were outlandish on purpose. It was race relations *reductio ad absurdum*; he took the banality of white supremacy to its logical extreme to highlight its incongruities. Pierce's story does not quite accomplish that task so much as it complicates her own findings. Still, her approach holds value in that it illuminates the importance of capturing both the researcher's and the subject's affectations as cause and effect of racialized dynamics. Pierce's strategy recalls James Clifford and George Marcus' mantra that ethnographic accounts are "controlled fictions of difference and similitude" (Clifford 1986: 101). Ethnography can all too easily devolve into anesthetized accounts devoid of discomfort and doubt, if the writer fears to tread where Pierce holds courage to travel. When all is said and done, her method strongly gestures toward the continued crisis of Western sociology, in which the paradigm has yet to "... fully embrace contradiction and ambivalence within their theoretical frameworks" (p. 140).

Reference

Clifford, James, and George E. Marcus. 1986. *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Not Just Roommates: Cohabitation after the Sexual Revolution, by Elizabeth H. Pleck. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2012. 290pp. \$27.50 paper. ISBN: 9780226671048.

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Perhaps one of the most dramatic changes in modern family life has been the rapid growth in unmarried cohabitation. Since 1970, the number of opposite-sex unmarried couple households has increased by more than ten-fold. Cohabitation is now a normative stage in the family life course, preceding a majority of marriages. It is a family form in its own right, less often culminating in marriage than in the past and more often serving

as a childbearing context. Over 20 percent of births in the United States are to cohabiting mothers.

Despite the fact that cohabitation is now widespread among the U.S. population, the pathway to its ascendancy as a common family experience is less well established. Social scientists and historians have explored historical changes in marriage and divorce, but book length treatments of cohabitation are comparatively few. Moreover, to the best of my knowledge, none addresses the emergence of cohabitation in the United States from an historical perspective.

Not Just Roommates: Cohabitation after the Sexual Revolution, by Elizabeth H. Pleck, fills this notable gap. Drawing on specific examples from case law, Pleck pieces together a modern history of cohabitation, demonstrating that cohabitation is effectively a form of "sexual citizenship" that is accorded second-class treatment under the law and through social policies to buttress the privileged position of marriage. Moreover, the treatment of cohabitators depends in part on race and social class. Cohabitators who are well-off are able to maintain privacy in their union but those seeking government assistance (e.g., welfare) have no assurance of privacy. Even many who are public employees learn the hard way that they have no right to privacy. Pleck provides examples of school teachers, police officers, and other public workers who have lost their jobs because they were cohabiting. Cohabitation is not a marital status and therefore cohabitators receive no legal protections against discrimination on the basis of their cohabitation. Although the Supreme Court found the ban on interracial cohabitation unconstitutional three years before it declared the ban on interracial marriage unconstitutional, it has never declared the criminal punishment of cohabitation as unconstitutional, according to Pleck.

Beginning with the 1960s, Pleck offers an extensive review of key legal challenges to the second-class treatment of cohabitators. She details landmark cases that have shaped social reactions to cohabitation. The chapters, which each feature different cases (except for Chapter Six, which provides a fascinating look at the academic challenges faced by pioneer cohabitation researcher Eleanor