
Central to the sociology of multicultural studies is that it yields a model of how different ethnic groups can coexist. A diversity of conceptions of the structure and perception of intergroup relations is the inevitable result (Rex & Mason, 1986), with different social science perspectives yielding equally viable results. Sociologically constructed multicultural models revolve around issues such as the intersection of ethnicity and mechanisms of social inequality, or point at institutional (re)arrangements at the level of the social organization (Simpson & Yinger, 1972; Rex, 1996). The social psychological dimension clearly shows the cognitive boundaries between ethnic groups determined and maintained by highly effective cognitive processes of categorization and outgroup stigmatization (Brewer & Miller, 1996). Sociobiological frameworks then explain and predict intergroup dynamics on the basis of evolutionary stable reproductive strategies (Van den Berghe, 1981; Reynolds et al., 1987; Thienpont & Cliquet, 1999).

As is the case with all social science frameworks, the multi-ethnic models at some point have to confront social reality. At that point, models of multi-ethnic societies need to take into account the critical adaptation that is reflected in this book’s central theme: the operational merits of multi-ethnic models depend on the fit of the model to local conditions. Both ethnic groups and receiving countries bring with them histories and inheritance, and specific religious and political backgrounds. Ethnic groups change in their sociological and demographic characteristics, and their ties and relationships with the country of origin, as well as with the receiving country, are constantly redefined (Lievens, 1997). Are theoretical models of multi-ethnic societies capable of covering this contextual and temporal variability?

This book is inclined to answer this question in the negative, as it departs from the general standpoint that the content of the concept of ‘the ethnic minority’ is in essence context-derived. In each particular multi-ethnic society, the minority status of populations is determined by the specific socio-historical context and the characteristics of the majority population with which they are confronted. The treatment of ethnic minorities in this book thereby transcends the more ethnocentric views on ethnicity, linking it to cultural or ethnic distinctiveness. The message to the social scientist is double: in the construction of research designs, be warned of the imposition of both social categories as these are vivid in popular conceptions, and of the illusion of scientific objectivity. The idea of social construction is therefore at the heart of the design of this book. Through a range of case studies, discussing sociological, demographic, political and economic aspects of the situation of ethnic minorities in particular countries, it is thought that the relativity of a singular and one-dimensional definition of ethnicity in the first place but ethnic minority in particular becomes self-evident.
The structure of this bilingual book (fourteen contributions are in French, four in English) revolves around four themes, each of which represents a classic research field in itself within the study of intergroup relations. The first theme – ‘Quantifying minorities’ (‘Dénombrement des minorités’) – comprises four papers dealing with the approach of the concept of ethnic minorities in general and the operationalization of the concept within the framework of population censuses in particular. It is thus rather about the process of conceptualizing in order to be able to quantify. According to Patrick Simon, the different conceptions of ethnicity in the first American censuses and the development of sociological assimilation theories as a consequence of this use of the concepts, as well as the fluidity of the conceptual borderline between the ‘race’ concept and the ‘ethnic group’ concept in the U.K., illustrate how national contexts determine the approach to ethnicity. The other papers in this section discuss the representation of ethnic categories within the framework of censuses, national contexts and conceptions in Canada (Gustave Goldmann), Russia (Alain Blum and Catherine Gousseff) and Greece (Morgane Labbé).

The second section – ‘Economic and social integration’ (‘Intégration économique et sociale’) – on the one hand confirms the general view that nationality is a determinant for socioeconomic status differences, income differences and the unequal distribution of labour market opportunities (Jean Renaud, Victor Piché, Lucie Gingras and Jean-Louis Dayan, Annick Echardour, Michel Glaude) but on the other hand stresses the effect of important mediating variables: the temporary nature of some of these inequalities as the second and third generation enter society (the need to differentiate between age groups), the different magnitudes of these inequalities depending on country of origin of immigrants, and the importance of language (Roderic Beaujot, Justus Veenman); the association between language proficiency and a number of socioeconomic determinants and criteria, the characteristics of country of origin and the influence of the immigration policy of the receiving countries (Monica Boyd, Kee Pookong); the geo-political, regional and religious history of the receiving country (Sergio Dellapergola); and the effects of internal migration on processes of economic integration in an urban setting (Sadio Traoré).

This last paper in the second section is the lead to the third: ‘Multicultural coexistence in urban contexts’ (‘La cohabitation multiculturelle dans les villes’). It is shown that urban housing policies influence the housing conditions of members of the various ethnic minorities leading to socioeconomic inequalities between minority groups (Paul White), in what ways the integration of minority members is related to housing conditions and housing policies (Jean-Claude Toubon), what problems may occur in educational participation by minority members and how policy members may respond (Marie McAndrew).

The fourth and final section bears the weight of the ambitious heading ‘The dynamics of intercommunity relations’ (‘Dynamique des relations intercommunautaires’). The demographic version of these sorts of dynamics is strikingly illustrated in Youssef Courbage’s contribution, describing the ‘balance of power’ motives behind reproductive decisions and the way demographic processes are used as political weaponry in Ireland. The Malaysian case (Gavin W. Jones) shows the tense living together of three large ethnic groups and the influence of economic policy and religion on their relative power. In the closing paper, Jean-Louis Rallu argues first of all that
a social meaning predominates the ethnic interpretation of the concept of an ethnic group, that the status of the minority is dependent on the sociological level considered, and holds a plea for a shift from socially or culturally ascribed characteristics to individual-level traits in social interaction as the basis for multiculturalism.

Although the book cannot escape the fundamental conflict between the social constructivist position towards ethnicity on the one hand, and the necessity, from a social scientific point of view, to make a choice for an analytical usable concept of ethnicity, the editors have put together a very informative book with good quality papers. The central point, defined by Jocelyne Streif-Fenart in the Introduction, becomes abundantly clear from the case studies: first, the nature of intergroup relations is determined by a sociological complex, comprising demographic, economic, religious, historical and political dimensions, and second, it ought to take into account a subjective dimension. The need for substantial input from qualitative research runs throughout the book. Those theorists of multi-ethnic societies who might be disappointed that the book lacks a final chapter that fully integrates into a comprehensive framework the conclusions deriving from the contributions, will no doubt be compensated by the wealth of country- and region-specific data presented here.

References


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The book is based on the experiences (interviews or records) of 115 American women of various ages between 17 and 75 (but mostly in their twenties), of different ethnic
origins, confessions, educational levels and socioeconomic backgrounds. To write and publish such a book means breaking the social taboo of discussing abortion ‘on a personal level’ (p. xix), which exists not only in the United States where debates between ‘pro-life’ and ‘pro-choice’ supporters have always been very intense, but in other countries as well.

The book relates to many aspects of the abortion experience and gives a lot of individual views and opinions on each. It ‘maps the territory’ that can give its readers emotional support. And this is exactly the aim of this book: to help women who are either going to have an abortion or have already been through it.

Eve Kushner at some point in her life went through an unplanned pregnancy and abortion herself and was shocked by the experience, and by the lack of information and emotional support. To fill the gap she started working on this project which took 5 years of research. She combines – ‘weaves’ – individual voices with their unique experiences into a collective, common structure.

The book consists of five parts, seventeen chapters and an epilogue, followed by a list of recommended reading. Each chapter deals with some easily recognizable, in their commonality, emotional aspects: e.g. ‘moving through moodiness’ (Chapter 1); ‘coping with stress and regaining control’ (Chapter 2); ‘allowing ourselves to grieve the losses’ (Chapter 4); ‘feeling sure of the decision’ (Chapter 8); ‘strengths and weaknesses’ of partners as revealed in this stressful period of relationships (Chapter 16), etc. The epilogue summarizes all these experiences in the form of practical advice for women who are in the process of decision-making or emotional and psychological ‘aftershock’. It also suggests some steps for improving counselling to change the abortion experience and discusses some alternative methods of abortion.

The book is frank, open and well written. It helps to understand the circumstances that make women seek an abortion. Discussing all the difficulties and complexities of abortion experience, the author firmly stands for women’s rights of reproductive choice. Aimed mainly, as already mentioned, at helping women to get through the ‘unknown territory’ (p. xx), the book will be an interesting read for women not only inside the United States but also in other countries, including those where abortion was, or still is, the major means of contraception. It would also be a valuable addition to the libraries of those specializing in women’s studies, psychotherapy and counselling.

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Forgotten in Africa by being confined to the left bank of the Zaire River, forgotten in a dusty box at the Tervuren Museum, the bonobo has nevertheless been ‘foreseen’ in some individuals classified as chimpanzees, such as Prince Chimp from the Yerkes’ colony, even before the discovery by Harold Coolidge and Ernst Schwarz in the 1930s.
In addition, literature on bonobos has been increasing in the last 30 years (Herbert & Courtois, 1994), despite the difficulties of conducting research in their natural habitat and small captive groups. However, even if important scientific publications are available, this species tends still to be forgotten, probably due to its similarity to the chimpanzee - a popular species known by many through the media. This book, with its introductory text and exceptional photos, will explain the species to a wide public and will enable the reader to learn how to distinguish bonobos from other primates.

The readers are led into the world of bonobos by a series of beautiful photos taken in the wild and in captivity. The first chapter, entitled ‘the last ape’ - as the book published by Kano on his field research on bonobos - briefly introduces the discovery of the species and its position from an evolutionary perspective. Following the text there is a series of images of the different apes, which frames the comparison between bonobos and chimpanzees that is covered in Chapter 2. Differences and similarities in morphological and behavioural features are described. Particular relevance is placed on morphology, ‘politics’ - one of Frans de Waal’s favourite topics - and cognitive abilities of the two species. Other portraits of bonobos then lead the reader into ‘the heart of Africa’.

Chapter 3 describes the history, difficulties, and successes of field research on bonobos in Zaire and their academic- and conservation-related importance. Characteristics of the bonobos’ society are described by also reporting episodes from the field-site Wamba, where research has been undertaken by Japanese primatologists. Photos of ‘the life in the forest’ described in the text precede Chapter 4 on bonobo sexual behaviour.

In these ‘apes from Venus’, sexual behaviour plays an important role in maintaining social bonds. Therefore, an extended description of the different sexual and erotic behaviours and their variety of functions is found in the text, enriched by photos of ‘intimate relations’.

Chapter 5 discusses the species characteristics in the context of evolutionary models, thus showing the links between humans, chimps and bonobos in terms of their society and behaviour. Photos on communication among bonobos exemplify their similarities to us - similarities covered also in Chapter 6 by explaining the sensitivity of these creatures through the narration of some anecdotes.

Between photos of everyday bonobo social life and their struggle for survival, the present and future status of this species is explored in the epilogue. It illustrates the present situation for wild populations and their threats (e.g. bushmeat trade, pet trade) and that for zoo populations and their management.

Within some of the chapters, interviews by Frans de Waal of different experts (S. Savage-Rambaugh, T. Kano and S. Kuroda, F. Lanting, B. Fruth and G. Hohmann, A. Parish) greatly enrich the text.

The bibliography is comprehensive on the studies conducted on bonobos. However, it would have been useful to reference the studies throughout the text, even if it would have disrupted the reader from the pleasure of gaining a general and broad understanding of the species.

The balance between the text and the wonderful photos will develop an interest in the reader in achieving a deeper understanding of some of the topics from the
growing scientific literature. Extremely readable, the book is addressed to a wide audience from anyone interested in animals and our origins to scholars in primatology, anthropology, sociology, gender studies, psychology, biology and environmental studies.

Reference


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This handbook is an excellent tool for all fieldworkers, trainers and project planners involved in water and sanitation activities. It provides practical guidelines to be used for planning a hygiene evaluation and an adequate assessment of existing practices. The book also possesses good details on latest participatory methods used for assessment of hygiene behaviours. The authors have, therefore, produced a tool that can help in the provision of systematic baseline information that can be used for planning interventions, monitoring impacts and assessing the impact of an intervention. The breadth of the guidelines enables their application to a variety of evaluations, depending on the project objectives. However, it is lacking on ways to set up a hygiene promotion programme once baseline information has been gathered.

There are two criticisms of this volume. First, it could have been made more attractive (the ‘aged’ feel of the yellow paper and font are disappointing after the bold cover); and second, some of the text is in a small typeface (especially in the boxes), impacting on both its user friendliness and the illustrative value of the examples. However, this handbook provides a good introduction to evaluation methods for hygiene practices, and includes some interesting ‘do’s’ and ‘don’ts’ for junior fieldworkers and senior workers.

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