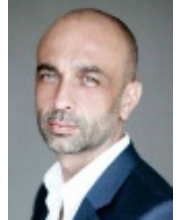


Book Review: Responses to Stigmatization in Comparative Perspective

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Responses to Stigmatization in Comparative Perspective provides new data and analysis of how stigmatization affects a range of societies, with case studies from the US, Brazil, Canada, France, Israel, South Africa, and Sweden considering how diverse minority groups respond to stigmatization in the course of their everyday lives. A fascinating and compelling read, concludes **Jean-Philippe Dedieu**.



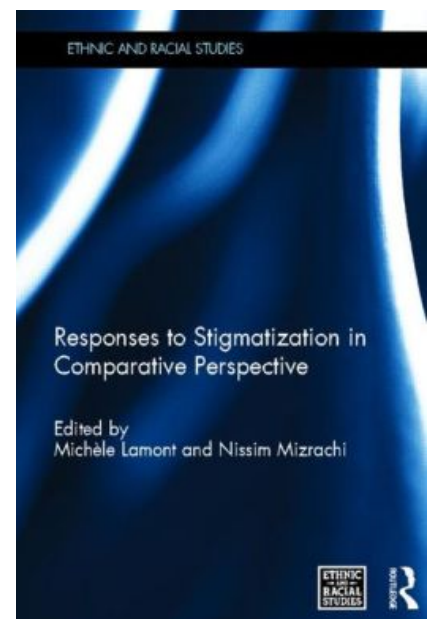
Responses to Stigmatization in Comparative Perspective. Michèle Lamont and Nissim Mizrahi (eds). Routledge. September 2013.

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The increasing expansion and diversification of migratory flows from the African continent since the 1960s has led to a significant renewal of scholarship on ethnic and racial studies. The Americas have witnessed a surge in African migrations that renders more complex the analysis of racial boundaries in countries that still struggle with the legacy of slavery. Europe has been for almost half a century one of the most symbolic destinations for citizens of former colonies. The Middle East, especially Israel, has also lately been experiencing some significant changes in its demographic composition due to the influx of refugees fleeing African civil wars as well as the repatriation of Ethiopian Jews. These migratory flows are contributing to a redefinition of symbolic borders between social groups and to a reshaping of racial identifications worldwide

In her quest to better understand the contemporary dynamics of class and ethno-racial inequality, [Michèle Lamont](#), Professor of Sociology and African and African-American Studies at Harvard University, has collaborated with [Nissim Mizrahi](#), Chair of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Tel Aviv University, in order to shed light on everyday responses to stigmatization. The authors tackle this crucial issue by going back to the pioneering work of Erving Goffmann, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, first published in 1963. The work of this American sociologist, which has contributed to a renewed sociology of social movements, has proved to be highly influential recently in the field of social psychology concerning the analysis of how cognitive categories are set up and used in the social processes of stigmatization, labeling and discrimination.

In this path-breaking survey supported by the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs at Harvard University, Lamont and Mizrahi took this large bibliography to another level by infusing it with sociological literature on racism and by embracing a cross-continent perspective that spans no less than Africa (South Africa), the Americas (US, Canada and Brazil), Europe (France, Sweden) and the Middle-East (Israel).



Edited by Routledge in a collective volume, the main results of this unprecedented study show a wide-ranging repertoire of reactions to (perceived) racism and discrimination by members of stigmatized groups. According to the typology established and discussed by the co-authors, a first category of persons prefers to prevent conflict by emphasizing their professional competence and intelligence. A second category prefers to deflate conflict by simply ignoring or tolerating incidents of racism. Finally, a third and last chooses instead to address and to confront the attitudes and stereotypes of racial prejudice by filing legal complaints or engaging in collective protests. As shown in the different case studies examined in depth by the authors, each anti-racist strategy engages a form of self-management which requires a specific emotional labour and for which the resultant health effects cannot be disregarded. Interested readers should also see Jovonne J. Bickerstaff's table showing Antiracist Practices by Modality in her article '[All Responses Are Not Created Equal: Variation in the Antiracist Responses of First-Generation French Blacks](#)'.

Following on the [research begun by Lamont](#) in the field of comparative sociology, this survey also underlines the nuances and variations of responses depending on different national contexts. In the case of the United States, examined by Crystal M. Fleming, Jessica S. Welburn and Lamont, the legacy of the civil rights movement in the United States explains why African-Americans opt more for confronting strategies than for other anti-racist responses. In France, French Caribbean and French Africans, whose social movements have been studied by Fleming, have – in spite of a common ancestry – distinct collective histories that lead to competing models for challenging and reversing the stigma of racism. In Israel, Ethiopian Jews formulate, according to Hanna Herzog and Mizrachi, specific strategies by de-emphasizing their racial identities and claiming their common belonging to the Zionist project. These different studies, whose analysis will be refined in forthcoming individual or collective books, show not only the importance of national narratives and identities in the formation of racial and ethnic boundaries, but also in the elicitation of individual or collective responses to their rigidity and salience.

What makes this collective study so fascinating and compelling is the way in which the richness of the quantitative and qualitative materials gathered by the social scientists involved enables the reader to observe a multiplicity of social interactions performed in different national contexts, while at the same time illuminating the common challenges faced at the global level by millions of people in their private or public struggles with racial prejudice and intimate despair.

Jean-Philippe Dedieu is a Research Fellow at Iris of the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) and an Associate Researcher at DIAL of the Institut de Recherche pour le Développement (IRD). Jean-Philippe's research examines a variety of topics in political science and political sociology — including African migrations, ethnic & racial discriminations as well as transnational political participation. He is the author, most recently, of *[Immigrant Voices: African Immigrants in the Public Sphere in France, 1960–1995](#)*. Follow him on twitter [@jphdedieu](#). [Read more reviews by Jean-Philippe](#).

