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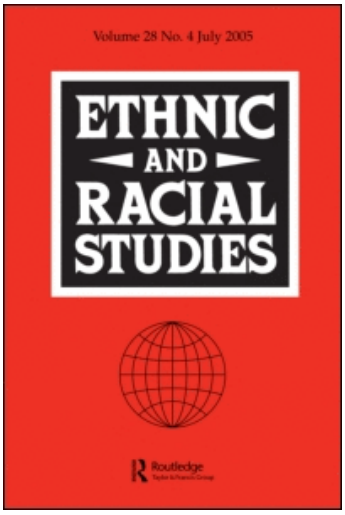

Ethnic and Racial Studies

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Book reviews

Luuk Slooter [a]; Danielle Hedegard [b]; John Clammer [c]; Kalwant Bhopal [d]; Raul Fernandez [e]; Suki Ali [f]; David Chilosi [g]; Michael Irvin Arrington [h]; Ken-Hou Lin [i]; Patricia E. Literte [j]; Christie Davies [k]; Milton Vickerman [l]; Leslie H. Picca [m]; Carl L. Bankston [n]; Matthew W. Hughey [o]; Daniel Briggs [p]; Karl Atkin [q]; Gabriella Lazaridis [r]; Peter Ling [s]; Carolina Ivanescu [t]; John D. Brewer [u]; Manuela Honegger [v];Peter Kivisto [w]

[a] Centre for Conflict Studies, Utrecht University, [b] Department of Sociology, University of Arizona, [c] Office of the Rector, United Nations University, [d] School of Education, University of Southampton, [e] School of Social Sciences, University of California, Irvine [f] Department of Sociology, London School of Economics, [g] Economic History Department, London School of Economics, [h] Department of Communication, University of Kentucky, [i] Department of Sociology, University of Massachusetts, Amherst [j] Department of Sociology, California State University, Fullerton [k] University of Reading, [l] University of Virginia, [m] University of Dayton, [n] Department of Sociology, Tulane University, [o] Mississippi State University, [p] University of East London, [q] Department of Health Sciences, University of York, [r] Department of Politics and International Relations, University of Leicester, [s] University of Nottingham, [t] Erasmus University, Rotterdam [u] University of Aberdeen, [v] Institute of Political and International Studies, University of Lausanne, [w] Department of Sociology, Augustana College,

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The Supreme Court's school desegregation decision of 1954 encapsulated this thinking, but even de Schweinitz admits that the compassion for every child that seemed to animate such liberalism dissipated when measures to alleviate African American disadvantage seemingly threatened the chances of other children in the eyes of their parents. Thus, on the one hand, her emphasis on childhood is highly accurate; civil rights leaders used images of children to rally support and raise funds. (And the advertisements we see for charities today tend to follow this tradition wherever they can.) However, this generosity of spirit that empathizes with the suffering child was tempered by a visceral distinction between the interests of one's own children and others. While policy may seek universal uplift, parents primarily want their own child to thrive. The policy that ordered the desegregation of southern schools spurred the re-segregation of southern neighbourhoods and the privatization of much education.

Another challenge for de Schweinitz's work is the difficulty of defining youth. The dual processes of banning child labour and extending high school education are the foundations for the emergence of youth as a privileged phase of life, but this definition intrinsically reveals the class and, to some extent, spatial and gender biases of the concept. For the wealthy, youth could readily extend through the college years; and the character of youth was similarly affected by gender and location in town, country or metropolitan community. Without a consistent definition of youth's upper limit, when do individuals fall outside the scope of this study? The Nashville students such as Diane Nash and John Lewis were certainly youthful in 1960, but by 1965 both had seen and experienced so much that they were classed as movement veterans and had arguably moved beyond the youth category. Moreover, while there is merit in highlighting the impact of youth within movement activities, what is equally striking is how people of all ages engaged new possibilities, with elderly African Americans learning new skills and breaking out of deeply carved patterns.

Finally, de Schweinitz rightly acknowledges the dangers in the practice of associating African Americans with the images of youth and childhood in terms of its implicit affirmation of a racist denial of positive, black adult agency. This was a real dilemma that echoes still, even in Obama's America. In short, this is an interesting study that needed more rigour and greater originality.

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University of Nottingham

Abdulkader H. Sinno (ed.), **MUSLIMS IN WESTERN POLITICS**, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009, 301 pp., $24.95 (paper).

The range of topics discussed and the large breath of comparison make *Muslims in Western Politics* a valuable contribution to the field of minority studies. Although many books have been written about Muslims in the West, the harmonious blend of social science inquiry and policy recommendation make this book interesting for academics, but also for a larger audience. Written by a group of international scholars coming from diverse disciplines, using quantitative as well as qualitative methods of inquiry, it offers a fresh and varied look on the interaction and effect of Muslim minorities and state institutions on each other.

J. Christopher Soper and Joel S. Fetzer assert that church–state relations particular to each nation state provide the basis upon which Islam and Muslims are accommodated. Political discussions about Muslims are, in their view, a rekindling of the dormant religious disputes of the past, concerning the social role and authority attributed to the state and religion(s). While Soper and Fetzer stress the difference between different legacies of institutionalization influencing current approaches of religious pluralism, Jorgen Nielsen argues that national models, namely French assimilationism and British integrationism, differ in form rather than substance. He argues that individual rights of religious freedom as expressed by the European Convention have a greater influence today than constitutionally defined and nationally specific church–state relations. The tension between form and content

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is captured by Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and Robert Stephen Ricks in a slightly different manner, as through historical analysis they point out the divergence between the American ideal of religious freedom and the reality of marginalization of religious minority groups. The authors identify the post-9/11 moments as most appropriate for the revision of the ideal of religious freedom, as well as for the re-examination of Islamic theological and ideological constructs, envisaging a balance and accommodation of both state and religion to each other.

The second part of the book focuses on political institutions. Abdulkader H. Sinno talks about the under-representation of Muslims in American politics, which he attributes to a general reluctance to participate, a poor understanding of the political process and a general negative attitude towards Muslims. The practice of involving the Muslim community in security issues has already been successfully applied in Canada, as we find out from Kent Roach – and although representation does not necessarily guarantee success, Muslim voices are being heard in the political debate. In the UK, A.H. Sinno and Eren Tatari point out that Muslims are present in the political life at different levels. However, only a small percentage of the politically active Muslims take active leadership on Muslim minority issues; others maintain a loose connection to Islam as religion, identity or culture. As Muslim interlocutors are needed by the nation-states, Jytte Klausen explains, Muslim leaders are inevitably involved as representatives in organization, representation and participation. As the label Muslim is 'in play' in most of the Western European countries, it provides an opportunity for extensive identity politics which might be connected to religion in myriad ways.

Institutions can shape the perception of Muslims. The role of different forms of media in shaping public opinion is not to be underestimated, and especially important are portrayals of international conflicts, point out Erik C. Nisbet, Ronald Ostman and James Shanahan talking about America. Talking about American mainstream culture, Amaney Jamal draws attention towards the racialization and 'otherization' of Arabs and Muslims based on stereotyped assumptions about religion and culture. The construction of the Muslims as 'the other' feeds the infringement of civil liberties, she argues. Jodie T. Allen and Richard Wike, on the other hand, working with data from Pew global attitudes project, point out that negative perception is not necessarily reciprocal. European Muslims have a positive opinion about the majority population, maintaining that Western life can be compatible with the tenets of Islam.

In the fourth part, talking about civil rights and legal institutions, David Cole explains the negative effects of the American 'preventive paradigm', which in the name of the war against terror breaks the separation of power between the congress, the judiciary and the executive. This political position is created while maintaining negative image about the Muslims, which has a direct impact on the American Muslim minority. The development of a common framework for combating terrorism in the European Union also imperils minorities through stigmatization. Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen calls upon a better coordination between the individual member states, a stronger dialogue and debate with and for the affected minorities.

Muslims in Western Politics points out how Muslim minorities interact with different national state–religion relations, political, legal and public institutions, how they are influenced and shaped by them. At the same time, the contributing authors see how the Muslim presence has a normative and also positive effect on the above-mentioned institution, shaping and forming, at their turn, the Western liberal democracies of which they are by now part. The policy recommendations which conclude the book are meant to make the most of the encounter between nation-states and Islam.

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Erasmus University Rotterdam

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