

2016

# The Color of Love: Racial Features, Stigma, and Socialization in Black Brazilian Families (Book Review)

Jan Hoffman French

*University of Richmond*, [jfrench@richmond.edu](mailto:jfrench@richmond.edu)Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholarship.richmond.edu/socanth-faculty-publications> Part of the [Race and Ethnicity Commons](#)

## Recommended Citation

French, Jan Hoffman. Review of *The Color of Love: Racial Features, Stigma, and Socialization in Black Brazilian Families*, by Elizabeth Hordge-Freeman. *American Journal of Sociology* 122, no. 3 (2016): 993-995

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Sociology and Anthropology at UR Scholarship Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Sociology and Anthropology Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of UR Scholarship Repository. For more information, please contact [scholarshiprepository@richmond.edu](mailto:scholarshiprepository@richmond.edu).

“classified perceived nonwhite Latin American ethnicities in the United States as Hispanic (e.g., Mexicans, Dominicans) and classified Latin American nationalities that are historically considered to be white as Latino (e.g., Argentines). . . . and themselves (who are perceptibly white in comparison to nonwhite Latin American nationalities)” (p. 49). This is a near perfect inversion of both community and academic understandings of the relationship between *latinidad* and hispanicity, where the term *Latino/Latina* is understood to signal racially mixed heritage that is by definition nonwhite and *Hispanic* is understood to signal Iberian (i.e., European) heritage and therefore affiliation with white racial identity (José Cobas and Jorge Duany, *How the U.S. Racializes Latinos* [Routledge, 2009]).

The question that usually arises is whether Brazilians, who are unequivocally Latin Americans, are also Latinos, even though they are of Portuguese rather than Spanish colonial heritage. For Joseph’s respondents, the relationship among hispanicity, *latinidad*, and Latin American heritage in the United States reflected the interaction between the “racialized hierarchy of Latin American nationalities” they brought with them and their sense making of the well-documented racialized discrimination against Latinos in the United States that they witnessed firsthand (Joe Feagin and José Cobas, *Latinos Facing Racism* [Routledge, 2013]). At the same time, the darker-skinned respondents in Joseph’s study found mostly differences of degree rather than substance between their U.S. and Brazilian experiences of racialization as Afro-Latinos; as black Brazilians, they experienced marginalization from U.S. Latinos/Latinas, from African-Americans, and from larger society alike (p. 77). Not surprisingly, therefore, the experience of race and racialization in the United States “made Brazil seem more cordial and aspirational for most white returnees but less egalitarian and more oppressive for black and pardo returnees.” The question of how immigrants are assimilated into the host country’s racial structure and schema—a process largely beyond their control yet that has clear material stakes—is largely understood by sociologists as a matter of racial ascription. How immigrants in turn come to understand and respond to that process of racialized assimilation—and quite often reascription downward on the racial hierarchy of the United States—is another thing entirely. *Race on the Move* does a fine job of mapping these intertwined, relational, and deeply transnational racial formations.

*The Color of Love: Racial Features, Stigma, and Socialization in Black Brazilian Families.* By Elizabeth Hordge-Freeman. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015. Pp. xiii+311. \$29.95.

Jan Hoffman French  
University of Richmond

*The Color of Love: Racial Features, Stigma, and Socialization in Black Brazilian Families* is an important contribution to the growing academic liter-

ature on race and color in Brazil. In an engaging, theoretically sophisticated book that brings to life intimate interactions among parents, children, siblings, and extended families, Elizabeth Hordge-Freeman uses a rigorous qualitative methodology to examine the crucible of racial socialization—the family. The site of her study is a working-class neighborhood in Salvador, Bahia, the city with the largest African-descendant population in Brazil and a destination for black tourists from around the world, especially the United States. The 10 core and five related African-descended families in her study (p. 18) all include phenotypically diverse members, have more than three children living at home, and are poor or working class (p. 251). Crucial to any good ethnographic analysis, the author reflects on her own race, color, phenotype, class, gender, and nationality in relation to the interactions she initiates and experiences with her research participants. In a particularly impressive move, Hordge-Freeman uses her own positionality quite effectively to elicit and develop deep, and often contradictory, responses that she then subjects to intensive analysis that extends beyond other studies of race and color in Brazil. This book is an excellent extension and deepening of the recent quantitative studies of Brazilian pigmentocracy (see Edward Telles, *Race in Another America: The Significance of Skin Color in Brazil* [Princeton University Press, 2004], and *Pigmentocracies: Ethnicity, Race, and Color in Latin America* [University of North Carolina Press, 2014]).

The introductory chapter provides a robust and highly readable explanation of where this study is situated in relation to recent literature and introduces new, important, concepts that will be useful for other scholars as they approach issues of racialization processes and their social-psychological effects on multiple generations in the same family. Using Pierre Bourdieu's framework of cultural and embodied capital as the basis for analysis, Hordge-Freeman introduces a series of conceptualizations specific to both the reinforcement of, and resistance to, racial inequalities, stigmatization of blackness, and hegemonic notions of whiteness and beauty within families. She introduces concepts such as embodied racial capital (p. 7), racial fluency (p. 8), racial rituals (p. 77), and gendered racial bargains (and critical accommodations; pp. 6, 86) to argue that love and affection within families are often unequally distributed based on phenotype, including skin color, hair texture, and facial features. This results in the granting or withholding of "affective capital" based on how "white" such features are considered. Suffering discrimination within one's own family is explored through ethnographic detail carefully placed within both lived experience and a clear theoretical framework. Through the connections between differential displays of love and affection based on societal norms of beauty, on the one hand, and the inculcation of racialized difference, with darker skin and African features read as negative, on the other, the author convincingly argues that the acquisition of social, economic, and affective resources necessary for social mobility is hampered. Mothers are charged with assuring that racial etiquette is observed by their children—an intersectional burden, sometimes heartbreaking, that is made explicit throughout the book.

*The Color of Love* is well organized, with the first part consisting of three chapters that examine the private sphere of family life. Here is where the author provides fine-grained ethnographic details about the birth of children and how their phenotypical differences impact siblings, parents, extended family, and their relationships. The examination of racialized dynamics within families is in distinction to most sociological literature that considers intermarriage and romance between partners as an important measure of racial acceptance or stigmatization. Hordge-Freeman's multigenerational approach adds nuance and a crucial component to a full understanding of the mechanisms by which racialized hegemony operates and of the strategies black Brazilians use to negotiate within and outside of the family sphere. The family and neighborhood, which according to commonsense thinking should be a safe environment, are discovered to sometimes feel as difficult to maneuver as the white spaces (or racially distinctive spaces) in the public sphere, which leads to the second part of the book. Here the author considers negotiation of racial socialization in relation to workplace, school, and public spaces. In these three chapters, contradictory statements, feelings, and interactions lead to a deeper understanding of the variety of strategies for social mobility in a highly racialized society that denies racism and considers itself a postracial society.

This book is an ideal complement to any study of racialization processes in the United States. As the author mentions, a next step would be to use the original conceptualizations in this book to analyze colorism within families in the United States, perhaps most significantly within Latino families in regionally and historically specific locations. As the book comes to an end, Hordge-Freeman effectively reveals, through emotionally engaged examples, the balancing of accommodation and resistance to entrenched racism in Brazil. This book is readable, while being nuanced and sophisticated, making it useful in a variety of settings: undergraduate and graduate courses in sociology, diasporic studies, anthropology, Latin American studies, race and ethnicity, and gender studies. *The Color of Love*, firmly rooted in the discipline of sociology, is interdisciplinary in the best possible way.

*Landscape of Discontent: Urban Sustainability in Immigrant Paris.* By Andrew Newman. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015. Pp. 304. \$105.00 (cloth); \$30.00 (paper).

David Brain  
New College of Florida

The core of this book is an ethnographic study of popular mobilization associated with the Jardins d'Éole, a major public park project in Paris. Officially inaugurated in 2007, the park became the focus of neighborhood activism during its planning, the site of collective action when completed, and a spatial manifestation of a popular politics presented as "part of a broader