THE MEANINGS OF MARITAL EQUALITY
SCOTT R. HARRIS

S
cott R. Harris develops an interactionist, interpretive approach to studying equality in social life by synthesizing the theoretical perspectives of four founding figures in interactionist, social constructivist thought—Herbert Blumer, Alfred Schutz, Harold Garfinkel, and John Dewey. He focuses on equality in marriage by examining the stories people tell about their equal and unequal marriages, and compares those tales to what researchers have had to say on the subject. Challenging conventional understandings of equality, Harris demonstrates that social scientists in general tend to impose interpretations of inequality onto their respondents’ lives, rather than respecting and studying the meanings that people live by.

“Harris’s unique approach moves well beyond the standard and, in my view, very tired thinking about what it means to have an equal (or unequal) marriage. If anything is central to the study of marriage and family, it’s the question of marital equality. Every scholar and graduate student working in this area will need to have this book, and even those who disagree with the approach will need to read what Harris offers in order to properly come to terms with it from their varied points of view.” — Jaber F. Gubrium, coeditor of Qualitative Research Practice

“Harris does an excellent job clarifying the differences between objectivist and constructionist perspectives. The issues he discusses are vital for any social scientific field. In some subfields, such as social problems research, the constructionist perspective is well established. In the family field there has been some discussion but no sustained presentation of how a constructionist perspective would offer an alternative way of understanding family life—Harris’s book makes a real contribution here.” — Stan J. Knapp, Brigham Young University

Scott R. Harris is Assistant Professor of Sociology at Saint Louis University.

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RACIAL COMPETITION AND CLASS SOLIDARITY
TERRY BOSWELL, CLIFF BROWN, JOHN BRUEGGEMANN, AND T. RALPH PETERS JR.

I
t sometimes seems that racial conflict is an intractable impediment to class solidarity in the United States. Yet in a time of economic depression and overt racism, the unions of the CIO did, on a number of occasions, forge interracial solidarity among industrial workers of the 1930s and 1940s. This book explores the role of racism and racial solidarity in union organizing efforts or strikes during the period between the Civil War and the Civil Rights Movement, covering both those conditions and actions that enabled unions to realize interracial solidarity and those more common circumstances in which union organizing was defeated by racial competition.

The authors combine theories of racial competition, specifically split labor market theory, with game theory models of collective action to compare the patterns of race relations that accompanied nine American labor organizing drives and strikes. They conclude that racial competition thwarted solidarity when minorities were recent immigrants or where employees used racist paternalism. Where conditions were more favorable, unions overcame racial divisions by institutionalizing their rhetoric about racial equality in the form of black organizers and black union officials, in what came to be known as the “miners’ formula.” This formula worked, and the CIO unions today remain among the country’s most integrated institutions and most powerful advocates of working class interests.

“…The case studies not only illustrate the value of split labor market theory, but also allow the authors to extend/modify the theory.” — Rory McVeigh, University of Notre Dame

Terry Boswell is Professor of Sociology at Emory University. Cliff Brown is Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of New Hampshire. John Brueggemann is Associate Professor of Sociology at Skidmore College. T. Ralph Peters Jr. is Professor of Sociology and History at Floyd College.

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DEBORAH CAHALEN SCHNEIDER

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Deborah Cahalen Schneider is an independent scholar living in Virginia.

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Identity, Discourse, and Racial Politics
in Popular Media
RONALD L. JACKSON II

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Ronald L. Jackson II is Associate Professor of Culture and Communication Theory at Penn State at University Park. He is the editor of African American Communication and Identities: Essential Readings.

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