

Beyond Loving: Intimate Racework in Lesbian, Gay, and Straight Interracial Relationships

Amy C. Steinbugler



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Beyond Loving provides a critical examination of interracial intimacy in the beginning decades of the twenty-first century-an era rife with racial contradictions, where interracial relationships are increasingly seen as symbols of racial progress even as old stereotypes about illicit eroticism persist. Drawing on extensive qualitative research, Amy Steinbugler examines the racial dynamics of everyday life for lesbian, gay, and heterosexual Black/White couples. She disputes the notion that interracial partners are enlightened subjects who have somehow managed to "get beyond" race. Instead, for many partners, interracial intimacy represents not the end, but the beginning of a sustained process of negotiating racial differences. Her research reveals the ordinary challenges that partners frequently face and the myriad ways that race shapes their interactions with each other as well as with neighbors, family members, co-workers and strangers. Steinbugler analyzes the everyday actions and strategies through which individuals maintain close relationships in a society with deeply-rooted racial inequalities-what she calls "racework." Beyond Loving reveals interracial intimacy as an ongoing process rather than a singular accomplishment. This analytic shift helps us reach a new understanding of how race "works"-not just in intimate spheres, but across all facets of contemporary social life.

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